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Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

'Truth is one : sages call It by various names'

अहं राष्ट्री संगमनी वसूनां
चिकितुषी प्रथमा यज्ञियानां ।
तां मा देवा व्यदधुः पुरुत्रा
भूरिस्थात्रां भूयविशयंतीम् ॥

मया सो अन्नमत्ति यो विपश्यति
यः प्राणिति य ईं शृणोत्युक्तं ।
अमंतवो मां त उप क्षियंति
श्रुधि श्रुत श्रद्धिवं ते वदामि ॥

अहमेव स्वयमिदं वदामि
जुष्टं देवेभिरुत मानुषेभिः ।
यं कामये तंतमुग्रं कृणोमि
तं ब्रह्माणं तमृषिं तं सुमेधाम् ॥

1. I am the Queen (*rāstrī*) of the universe and bring wealth (to My worshippers). I am the Knower (*cikituṣī*),¹ and the foremost among the objects of worship. I have assumed many forms (*bhūriṣṭhātrām*) and have entered (as the Atman) into all beings. Therefore the gods have established Me in many places.²

Rg-Veda 10.125.3

2. He who eats food, (eats) through Me, he who sees, who breathes, who hears what is spoken, does so through Me.³ Those who are ignorant (*amantavaḥ*) of Me perish (*upakṣiyanti*). Hear you who have ears: I tell you about That which is obtained through faith.⁴

Rg-Veda 10.125.4

3. Verily I myself say this—and My words are pleasing to gods and men—the person whom I love I make mighty: I make him a *brāhmaṇa*, a *ṛṣi*, a wise man.

Rg-Veda 10.125.5

* Continuation of *Devī-sūktam* in which the Divine Mother Herself speaks about Her divinity. This direct self-revelation of divinity and the clear, unambiguous declaration of the Motherhood of God make this hymn unique. But it too shares the central Vedic idea of the one Reality manifesting Itself in many forms.

1. That is, 'I have realized Brahman as My Self'—explains Sāyaṇa.

2. That is, 'I am the Self of the universe, whatever is done is all done by Me alone'—explains Sāyaṇa.

3. That is, 'I am the Śakti, Power, behind all these activities'.

4. Faith is necessary to understand spiritual truths.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

This month's EDITORIAL discusses two types of concentration through either of which our true spiritual centre may be discovered.

Doubts have often been raised as to whether Swami Vivekananda's treatment of Karma Yoga as an independent path and his emphasis on social service do not go against the view of orthodox Advaitins that Karma being a product of *Ajñāna* can neither lead to *Jñāna* nor coexist with it. Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, and an erudite scholar and spiritual personality, offers an illuminating clarification on this point in JNANA AND KARMA ARE COMPLEMENTARY. The article is based on a tape-recorded talk given to the novices of the Probationers' Training Centre, Belur Math.

TEILHARD DE CHARDIN AND CREATIVE EVOLUTION is a brilliant attempt to give a new interpretation to the relation between evolution and freedom in the thought of Teilhard, one of the greatest names in the history of the theory of evolution after Darwin. Dr. Beatrice Bruteau, the author of the article, is connected with several universities in America and is at present Director, Philosopher's Exchange, Winston—Salem, North Carolina, U.S.A.

In KARMA AND CHARACTER Swami Satyarupananda of Belur Math shows the importance of good Karma in the formation of a pure character.

THREE GREAT MYSTICS OF ISLAM by Prof. Ranjit Kumar Acharjee of the Department of Philosophy, Ramakrishna Mahavidyalaya, North Tripura, introduces the reader to three great philosopher-saints of Islam.

THE SPIRITUAL CENTRE WITHIN

(EDITORIAL)

Turning inward

One day a disciple asked Swami Vivekananda, 'The Ātman is all-pervading, the very life of the life of all beings and so very near, still why is it not perceived?'

Swamiji answered, 'Do you see yourself that you have eyes? When others speak of the eyes, then you are reminded that you have got eyes. Again when dust or sand enters into them and sets up an irritation, then you feel quite well that you have got eyes. Similarly the realization of this universal Ātman is not easily attained. Reading from the scriptures or hearing from the lips of the preceptor, one has some idea of It, but when the hard lashes of the bitter

sorrow and pain of the world make the heart sore, when on the death of one's near and dear relatives man thinks himself helpless, when the impenetrable and insurmountable darkness about the future life agitates his mind, then does the Jīva pant for a realization of the Ātman. Therefore is sorrow helpful to the knowledge of the Ātman.'¹

We usually think of ourselves only in terms of our relation with the external world. We constantly think of our home, our work and the people with whom we spend

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama, 1972), Vol. 7, pp. 226-7.

our time. We are continually struggling to meet the changes of our environment, and to the extent we succeed in this task we consider ourselves successful. Says Swami Vivekananda, 'Part of our energy is used up in the preservation of our bodies. Beyond that every particle of our energy is day and night being used in influencing others; and so, conversely, we are being influenced by them. This is going on all around us.'²

Swamiji has defined life as a constant struggle against nature. At the lower level it is a struggle for existence as Darwin has described it. But at a higher level it becomes a struggle for spiritual consciousness. Man's real nature is the Ātman or the Spirit which is of the nature of pure consciousness and bliss. No struggle is necessary for its existence, for it is self-existent, immortal and ever free. But owing to its identification with Prakṛti, the Self gets caught in the unconscious stream of life. So the real struggle for a spiritual aspirant is the struggle for consciousness—to fight against the automatism and unconsciousness of life.

Each individual life is a part of the cosmic life (Prakṛti) and is supported and maintained by it. All the food that the body requires and all the energy that the mind needs for thinking come from the life-force of Prakṛti called *prāṇa*. The movement of *prāṇa* follows certain universal laws, and the body and the mind work in accordance with these laws. One of the most important of these laws is the law of karma which states that every action, physical or mental, brings a reaction. The natural tendencies and capacities of a person and the environment he finds himself in are all believed to be the result of his past actions. It is the Ātman alone that is free,

and the only freedom that every man and woman really has is the freedom to realize the Ātman or God who is the Supreme Self.

And yet the majority of people remain so much engrossed in the manipulation of the objects, persons and events of the external world that they do not seek true freedom and happiness through Self-realization. It is only at critical moments when suffering and sorrow strike them that they wake up and try to understand the ultimate cause of sorrow. It is only then that they realize how bound they are. Sorrow and bondage are unavoidable characteristics of life in this world, but their ultimate cause cannot be understood at the lower levels of consciousness where, as Śrī Śaṅkara says, truth and falsehood have got mixed up. To know the truth one must reach a higher or deeper level of consciousness where the line dividing the immutable Ātman and the ever-changing Prakṛti, light and darkness, immortality and death, becomes clear.

Consciousness has two powers. One is the revealing power which enables one to know—to know oneself and objects. The second one is the power to impart reality to anything upon which it is focussed. The external world appears real to us when consciousness is focussed upon it. When it is focussed on the mind, mental images appear real as, for instance, happens in dreaming. In a mad person certain crazy images have become real because of the wrong focussing of consciousness. The whole field of man's experience of the world is the result of an outward focussing or projection of consciousness. In fact *prapañca*, the sanskrit word for the visible universe, literally means spread out or extended. Consciousness is so much mixed up in experience that its real nature cannot be known at the physical or mental level. To know the real nature of consciousness it must be focussed back upon its source,

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976), Vol. 2, p. 13.

the Ātman. This is what we try to do through meditation.

Focussing consciousness

The focussing of consciousness cannot be done in any way one likes. Though consciousness is formless and all-pervading, when limited by the mind it becomes *manomayah*—identified with the mind. Actually consciousness and mind are two different things like fire and iron, but owing to identification they *appear* to be one like a red-hot iron ball. According to this dualistic view (held by Sāṃkhya-Yoga and also by Advaita) focussing of consciousness means concentration of mind. The unitary view (held by the Tantras and Kashmir Śaivism) regards mind as a power emanating from consciousness. This power is called *cit-śakti* or *prāṇa*. The mind is only a particular form of *spandana* or vibration of this energy. So according to this view focussing of consciousness means concentration of energy. When the mind is purified and concentrated, its vibrations get reabsorbed into consciousness, and the aspirant realizes the Ātman.³

The Tantras hold that *cit-śakti* or *prāṇa* moves along three channels. In ordinary people only the two side channels, called *idā* and *piṅgalā* are active. They constitute what is called mind, and it is the movement of *prāṇa* in them that produces thoughts. Only a small quantity of energy normally travels along these channels, and as a result ordinary thinking and imagination are usually weak. But when concentration is practised, more energy flows and imagination becomes vivid. The major part of the energy, however, remains at the base of the spine in a dormant form called *kuṇḍalinī*. The central channel *suṣumnā* is meant for

the flow of this reserve energy, but in ordinary people it remains closed. It represents the *Jivātman*, and the six *cakras* in the central channel stand for six levels of consciousness of the Self. When the *suṣumnā* opens, *prāṇa* is withdrawn from the side channels. Then the mind, which is only energy, merges in the Self. This is how the Tantras describe Self-realization.

As the central channel remains closed in ordinary people, the six centres in it are beyond their reach. In them the side channels alone are active, and so concentration has to be practised somewhere along them. There are three special points where the *idā* and the *piṅgalā* conjoin. The highest point is between the two eyebrows and is called *rudra granthi*, the knot of Rudra. The second one is in the region of the heart and is called *viṣṇu granthi*, the knot of Viṣṇu.⁴ At these centres psychic energy naturally gets concentrated, and so the aspirant is advised to practise concentration at one of these centres during meditation. In intellectual people the *rudra granthi* is more active and therefore they find it easier to concentrate at the eyebrow centre. In emotional people the *viṣṇu granthi* is more active, and so they find it easier to concentrate at the heart centre. It matters very little at which of these two points one practises concentration.

The choice of the heart or the eyebrow centre is a matter of a person's temperament and is usually decided by the Guru. Hindu scriptures speak of both, though the Upaniṣads seem to give more importance to the heart-centre. The majority of aspirants choose the heart centre. But there are certain sects in India whose members practise concentration only at the eyebrow centre. Both the centres are regarded as sacred. If the heart is traditionally spoken of as the

3. Cf. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 7.26.1.

Sri Ramakrishna also says that pure mind and pure Ātman are one and the same.

4. There is a third knot, *brahma granthi*, below the navel which is not chosen as a centre for meditation.

inner shrine, the eyebrow centre is spoken of as the third eye. Hindu gods and goddesses are shown as having three eyes.

It should be remembered that all preliminary disciplines like austerity, prayer and worship are meant to regulate the working of the side channels. Even meditation in its early stages affects only these two channels. Its purpose then is to establish a preliminary point of control common to both *idā* and *piṅgalā*, and through that to harmonize these two channels. It is only when meditation becomes very deep that the aspirant comes to have some understanding of *suṣumnā*. As for the *cakras* in this central canal, they represent planes of actual supersensuous experience and are not meant for meditation.

Prāṇa is the universal life principle supporting the body and the mind. Through *prāṇa* the body influences the mind and the mind influences consciousness. When the mind is concentrated at certain points in the body a person's consciousness undergoes certain changes. The ancient sages studied this phenomenon in depth and gained a wonderful understanding of the energy system supporting human life. The three channels, the 'knots' etc. described above are not mere theoretical speculations but are based on the actual experiences of Yogis. Swami Vivekananda, a great Yogi of the highest order, has spoken of his own experience of them: 'When the meditation is deep one sees many wonderful things. While meditating at the Baranagore Math, one day I saw the nerves *idā* and *piṅgalā*. One can see them with a little effort. Then, when one has the vision of the *suṣumnā*, one can see anything one likes'.⁵

Viṣṇu yoga and śiva yoga

Sri Ramakrishna speaks of two types of meditation. Concentration of mind at the

heart he calls *viṣṇu yoga*. This is practised by those who meditate on a personal God. Concentration of mind at the eyebrow centre he calls *śiva yoga*. This is practised by those who meditate on the impersonal Spirit.

The Master explains these terms as follows. 'There are two kinds of meditation, one on the formless God and the other on God with form. But meditation on the formless God is extremely difficult. In that meditation you must wipe out all that you see or hear. You contemplate only the nature of your inner Self.... This is called *śiva yoga*. While practising this form of meditation, one directs one's look to the forehead.... There is another form of meditation known as *viṣṇu yoga*. The eyes are fixed on the tip of the nose. Half the look is directed inward and the other half outward. This is how one meditates on God with form.'⁶

The main purpose of fixing the mind at the heart or the forehead is to overcome mental automatisms caused by the dominance of the unconscious over man's conscious life. According to yogis, the unconscious dominates the mind when the two side channels do not function harmoniously. One of the minor Upaniṣads says that the *Jīva* (soul) oscillates up and down under the influence of *prāṇa* (meaning *idā*) and *apāna* (meaning *piṅgalā*), just as a ball hit with the hand rises again and again.⁷ Yogis try to harmonize the side channels through *prāṇāyāma*. But this is not necessary, for the same effect can be obtained through meditation. When through meditation *prāṇa* is held at one point, fluctuations in the working of the side chan-

6. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1972), p. 253.

7. प्राणापानवशो जीवो ह्यधश्चोर्ध्वं प्रधावति ।

आक्षिप्तो भुजदण्डेन यथोच्चलति कन्दुकः ॥

Dhyāna-bindu Upaniṣad, 48, 49.

5. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972), Vol. 7, p. 253.

nels gradually cease and the mind becomes calm. Then the dominance of the unconscious mind over the conscious mind decreases. The test of this is that you will be free from obsessions and fixed ideas. If you are troubled by a compulsive urge or a persistent thought, you may just sit down and practise regulated breathing. You will find the obsession leaving you in a short time. This shows what an important part the side channels play in normal thinking. When the mind is calm, you can practise meditation or deal with your life's problems more effectively.

Stages in concentration

Fixing the mind at the heart or forehead is only the first stage in meditation. According to yoga scriptures, *dhyāna* or meditation passes through three stages or degrees of concentration: *sthūla* or gross, *sūkṣma* or subtle and *para* or transcendental.⁸ In the first stage called *sthūladhyāna* the mind is fixed at one of the two centres mentioned above but the two side channels are not working in harmony. The object of meditation (usually the image of a deity) is not very clear, and the Mantra has to be repeated with much effort.

In the second stage called *sūkṣmadhyāna* the two side channels work in harmony and *prāṇa* flows freely in them. The mind becomes calm and steady, as if it were a block of glass. Concentration is now deep. The image becomes vivid and luminous and the Mantra bubbles up spontaneously. This stage is often called *sphuraṇa* which literally means scintillation or throbbing. At this stage any image that intrudes into the

mind becomes so vivid that many aspirants mistake them for real visions. Their own thinking may appear to them as the voices of divine beings. Others get into a state of drowsy stupor and may even mistake it for Nirvāṇa. These false experiences are a great obstacle in the path of meditation. What happens in such cases is that in a deeper state of concentration some people lose control over their minds. A part of the mind gets dissociated from the main stream of consciousness and appears as a new or strange experience. However, those who sincerely love God or seek Truth do not allow themselves to be deluded by such internal mirages. Such people gradually reach the third stage.

The third stage of meditation called *paradhyāna* is a transcendental state. Here *dhyāna* merges into *prajñā* or meditative illumination and the aspirant gets a glimpse of his higher Self, the Ātman. It is at this stage that he becomes aware of the presence of the *suṣumnā*. The side channels become inactive, the central channel becomes active, and *prāṇa* begins to flow from the former into the latter.

Whether the mind is fixed at the heart or at the forehead, meditation passes through these three stages. The distinction between these two centres becomes less and less as concentration deepens, and disappears completely at the third stage. Then the mind will not be aware of any particular centre in the body but will remain absorbed in the inner light.

The true spiritual centre

The two centres described above are only meant to aid the aspirant in concentration. They do not represent the real locus of the Ātman, the true Self. The actual locus of the Ātman is something to be discovered. The yogis identify it with the *suṣumnā*. It is only when this central channel opens and

8. Cf. *Kulārṇava Tantra*, 9.3.

cf. also Bhaskara Raya's commentary on the *Lalitā Sahasranāma*, 5.53, where Devi is said to have three forms: gross, subtle and supreme. The *Gheraṇḍa Samhitā* (Upadesa 6) speaks of these three stages as: *sthūla*, *jyotiḥ* and *sūkṣma* respectively.

becomes active can the true Self be experienced. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* refers to this central channel as *indra-yoni*, the path of Indra, the path of God-realization.⁹

In the Upaniṣads everywhere we find enquiries regarding the real nature of the Ātman. The need for enquiry would not have arisen if everybody had had the knowledge of the true Self. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* speaks of the Ātman as the source of bliss 'from which mind and word turn back, being unable to reach it'.¹⁰ The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says '(The Ātman) cannot be attained through speech, nor through mind, nor through eye. How can it be known except by those who only speak of it as pure existence?'¹¹

However, the great seers also declare that Ātman can be directly 'seen'. There is hardly a chapter in any Upaniṣad which does not bear witness to the sages' experiential certitude regarding the true nature of the Self. This leads to the conclusion that though the Ātman cannot be directly known through the impure gross mind, it can be seen through the pure subtle mind called *buddhi* or *dhī* or intuition. Ordinary concentration done with the impure mind may give at best some deeper understanding of the workings of the lower self or ego. But to attain the experience of the higher Self mere concentration is not enough. There must be a thorough purification of the mind. The Upaniṣads describe this purgation as *jñānaprasāda*, *dhātuprasāda*, etc. When the mind becomes pure, it manifests

the hidden faculty of *buddhi* through which the Ātman is realized. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* gives an apt illustration of this process : 'Just as a mirror which is cleaned of its impurities becomes bright and capable of reflecting a lustrous image, even so the individual vividly perceives the Ātman and attains satisfaction and freedom from sorrow'.¹²

The same Upaniṣad says that 'just as oil is hidden in sesame seeds or ghee in curds, just as water is hidden in springs or fire in the churning sticks,' even so is the Ātman immanent in the body.¹³ The Ātman is pure consciousness which is formless and pervades the entire personality of man. But when limited by mind and body, it appears to have a specific locus or seat, a point of self-reference, a centre in the body where its presence is most intensely felt. The Upaniṣads most commonly speak of the heart as that centre. This true centre of higher consciousness should not be confused with the anatomical heart or the emotional centre known as *viṣṇu granthi* situated in the outer sheaths. These latter centres may be used as a starting point in meditation, but the aspirant should go deeper and discover his real spiritual centre where shines the light of Ātman. This is an ineffable experience.

A transcendental experience cannot be communicated without the help of symbols. Therefore sages have used a variety of symbols to describe the nature of the

9. अन्तरेण तालुके, य एष स्तन इवालम्बते,
सेन्द्र योनिः ।

Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 1.6.1.

10. यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते, अप्राप्य मनसा सह ।

Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 2.4.1.

11. नैव वाचा न मनसा प्राप्तुं शक्यो न चक्षुषा ।
अस्तीति ब्रुवतोऽन्यत्र कथं तदुपलभ्यते ॥

Kaṭha Upaniṣad, 6.12.

12. यथैव विम्बं मृदयोपलिप्तं
तेजोमयं भ्राजते तत्सुधीतम् ।

तद्वाऽऽत्मतत्त्वं प्रसमीक्ष्य देही

एकः कृतार्थो भवते वीतशोकः ॥

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, 2.14.

13. तिलेषु तैलं दधनीव सर्पिरापः
स्रोतःस्वरणीषु चाग्निः ।

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, 1.15.

spiritual centre and the experience of Ātman there. Some of these symbols are drawn from empirical life. Some others are archetypal images originating in the depths of the collective unconscious of mankind and revealed to sages in mystic visions. One of the most well-known archetypal symbols is the lotus flower. It represents man's higher spiritual centre. It has been described as red, blue or white according to the level of consciousness where it manifests itself: a red lotus indicates a lower spiritual state, a blue lotus a higher state, and a white lotus a still higher state.¹⁴ The scriptures speak of lotuses having four, eight or more petals, the number of petals standing for certain powers and experiences which spontaneously unfold at different levels of consciousness.

In the Upaniṣads we find different systems of meditation based on the symbolism of the lotus. The most famous of these is the *dahara vidyā*. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* describes it as follows: 'Om. Now in this city of Brahman there is a mansion in the shape of a small lotus. In it is a small inner *ākāśa*. What is within that, that should be sought, that indeed one should desire to understand.'¹⁵ This *vidyā* must have been widely practised in vedic times. It serves as the prototype for most of the meditation techniques still practised in modern times. Its metaphysical basis is expounded in the *Brahma-sūtra* and its commentaries.¹⁶ But the deep spiritual significance of this meditation can be known only through a direct mystical experience.

Another symbol widely used to represent the higher spiritual centre is the *guhā*, cave.

14. Colour also gives an indication of the aspirant's psychic make up.

15. अथ यदिदमस्मिन् ब्रह्मपुरे दहरं पुण्डरीकं वेश्म दहरोऽस्मिन् अन्तराकाशस्तस्मिन् यदन्तस्तदन्वेष्टव्यं तद्वाव विजिज्ञासितव्यमिति ॥

Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 8.1.1.

16. *Brahma Sūtra*, 1.3.14-21.

Kaṭha and *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣads* frequently state that the Ātman 'dwells in the cave'. Śrī Śaṅkara invariably interprets the 'cave' as *buddhi*, the intuitive faculty. In the well-known hymn *Nārāyaṇa Sūkta* the spiritual centre is described as a sacrificial altar: 'At a distance of a finger span from the throat and above the navel lies the great altar of the universe illumined by a garland of flames....'¹⁷

Importance of spiritual centre

It does not matter how one visualizes one's spiritual centre—as a lotus or a cave or a sheath. But everyone should know who he really is and where his true being lies. A person may build a mansion or a palace for his body to dwell in, but if he has not found the real abode of his own soul, he should be regarded as homeless. Man needs and immortal abode which endures beyond the funeral pyre.

The whole universe is in a flux, everything is changing around us. Happiness and sorrow follow each other, and so do love and hate, profit and loss, health and disease, life and death. We need an immutable centre where we can remain unaffected by these dualities of life. Our own body and mind too are constantly undergoing change. Each of us is an aggregate of different types of life—empirical, emotional, intellectual, social and idealistic. The soul stands at a cross-roads where the unconscious, the subconscious and the conscious meet. We need a transcendental spiritual centre to integrate the different levels of our personality.

Every spiritual seeker must maintain an inner shrine where he can continually offer

17. अघो निष्ठया वितस्यान्ते नाभ्यामुपरि तिष्ठति ।
ज्वालमालाकुलं भाती विश्वस्यायतनं महत् ॥

Mahanarayana Upaniṣad, 13.7-12.

prayer, worship and the fruits of his work, an inner altar where he can continually sacrifice his ego. It is not enough to practise meditation. It is also necessary to know the abode of one's true Self, the point from which spiritual light will one day stream forth to illumine one's mind, the hidden door which will one day open into the boundless realm of the Spirit.

Beyond sorrow, beyond fear, beyond all weaknesses of the flesh, beyond ignorance, shines the immortal spiritual centre within all people. It is the true source of everlasting bliss. But ignoring it, we often seek happiness and security in the external world. As the Holy Mother says, the musk deer has musk in its navel but not knowing it, it runs here and there allured by the fragrance.,

Above all, it is important to know this: the spiritual centre within us is also the real source of our psychic energy. Everyone has to pass through periods of depression, listlessness, boredom, when the spring of creativity seem to dry up and the aspirant finds himself without energy or fervour to continue his spiritual practice. Known as 'the blues', 'dryness', or *accidie* as the early Christian ascetics called it, this kind of low-energy mood is a great obstacle in meditative life. It may be caused by several factors like conflicts or sense of incompleteness, but its immediate cause is that for some reason or other the spiritual centre has become inactive or the aspirant has lost contact with it. Reading books, seeking diversions or even consulting psychiatrists may not solve the problems, while simply sitting down and brooding over it may even make it worse. The only way to get rid of such moods is to go direct to the source of

power within us. It is always good to know that in the depth of our being we hold great reserves of power.

The way the body and the mind influence each other is fairly well known. But how exactly mind and consciousness are interrelated is not so commonly understood. The mind should not be regarded as a passive, inert screen of paper on which sense-impressions fall. It should rather be regarded as the power of consciousness. Just as sparks burst forth from fire, thoughts emerge from the Atman. This means that the spiritual centre within is not only the centre of our consciousness but also the source of all our mental energy. It is only when the mind loses contact with its own source, the Self, that the mood of depression sets in. When the spiritual centre is opened, or at least remains active, fresh energy starts flowing into the personality, and the feeling of 'dryness' or dissatisfaction disappears.

The awakening of the spiritual centre can be done in different ways. But they all mean an interior calling forth of the dormant powers of the Self. Instead of yielding to difficulties and depression, instead of trying to solve our inner problems through adjustments in the outer world, we should calmly seek our true spiritual centre and awaken it through silent interior calling, through prayerful self-invocation. Says Swami Vivekananda: '...call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakens. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity'.¹⁸

18. *Complete Works* (1973), Vol. 3, p. 193.

JNANA AND KARMA ARE COMPLEMENTARY

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I have been asked to comment on the alleged conflict between the ideas of Karma, rather Karmayoga, propounded by Swamiji and the view of Śaṅkarācārya that Karma is contradictory to Jñāna. At the outset, I would like to tell you that the controversy and confusion arise because of the wrong use and understanding of the terms Karma and Jñāna. Therefore, first of all, let us try to ascertain the proper meaning of these terms. Śaṅkara observes in *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* :

Karma is only for the purification of the mind and not for realizing the Truth. Truth is attained only through discrimination or meditation, and not by millions of Karma.¹

The terms karma and jñāna

Often we quote verses from Śaṅkara just to prove one or the other of the contradictory views: whether Karma is inferior to Jñāna or vice versa. Sometimes you find similar contradictory views in some *ślokas* in the *Gītā* also.² Such discussions are interesting no doubt, but a close scrutiny will reveal that this kind of comparison suffers from one defect, namely, the wrong use of the terms. When we use these terms Karma and Jñāna without proper reference to the context, they create confusion and consequently we mix up issues. They must be understood in the proper context in which they have been used.

1. चित्तस्य शुद्धये कर्म न तु वस्तूपलब्धये ।

वस्तुसिद्धिर्विचारेण न किञ्चित्कर्मकोटिभिः ॥

Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, 11.

2. *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 4.33, 37, 38.

Karma has been used by Śaṅkara in the sense of *sakāma karma*, that is Karma with selfish motive. The Karmas that have been prescribed in the scriptures are the means for attaining some kind of *abhyudaya* or prosperity in life here or hereafter. By Karma Śaṅkara means these Karmas only.

It is said that unless there is a motive behind it, Karma is not possible. It is the motive that actuates us to do something. A little thinking will reveal that we cannot have a motive unless we have some desire, and again, we cannot have desire unless we have a sense of imperfection. The sense of imperfection can be had only when there is ignorance in us about our real nature. According to Śaṅkara our real nature is the Ātman which is non-different from Brahman. It is our sense of imperfection that goads us to perform Karma.

Avidyā, kāma and karma

Avidyā, kāma, karma, these three words are used together. *Avidyā* means ignorance or wrong understanding of our real nature. *Kāma* means desire, and Karma means work or action. We have seen that desire goads us to do Karma only to achieve some *abhyudaya* or prosperity in life here or hereafter. That is why we find in many places in the commentaries of Śaṅkara that Karma cannot lead us to mokṣa or liberation because mokṣa is not the *phala* or result of any Karma. It is rather a state where all the Karmas and their *phala* culminate and where there is no sense of imperfection. It is a state of fulfilment and completeness, as it may be expressed in modern terms. This kind of liberation comes only through Jñāna or knowledge.

Therefore, Śaṅkara says that Jñāna and Karma are like light and darkness which cannot exist together. They are diametrically opposite to each other. Mokṣa is a state which is absolutely free from all desires whereas Karma is born of desire. But I would like to remind you that Jñāna and Karma appear to be contradictory only when they are used in the sense explained above, not otherwise.

Unfortunately, the word Karma has been wrongly understood by the common readers of Śaṅkara. They wrongly think that complete cessation of Karma is the ideal put forth by the great Ācārya. You should know he has condemned such an idea in many places. The *Gītā* says that mere cessation of all activities does not mean a state of knowledge.³ Knowledge does not mean inertia. It is not possible to be absolutely inactive at any stage of life, until one dies.⁴

So long as we are alive we have to be active in some way or the other. If a follower of the path of Jñāna wants to be inactive, then he cannot even be a follower of Jñāna, because the pursuit of knowledge itself is a kind of activity; it is mental activity. Therefore there is not so much contradiction between the two as we ordinarily understand. Once a senior monk who is now no more, wrote to Swami Turiyanandaji Maharaj: 'Maharaj, I feel any kind of activity brings in its train egoism, *ahamkāra*. Therefore I feel I should be free from all activity.' This meant that he would not do any work allotted to him. And the reply came: 'Do you think if you just abstain from all activity, your ego will disappear?' That is wrong understanding of *naiṣkarmya* or the state of inaction.

Śaṅkara has used the word *naiṣkarmya* in many places. The word *naiṣkarmya* or freedom from activity does not mean cessa-

tion of all kinds of activity, physical and mental: because only a dead person can be absolutely free from all kinds of activity in that sense. Śaṅkara or any other philosopher would never prescribe something which would not be useful and practicable for living persons. According to Śaṅkara Karma means only that sort of activity which is prompted by *kāma* or desire. It does not mean all kinds of activity. Therefore the conflict between Karma and Jñāna is only in the sense that when you are trying to be free from all desires, you cannot at the same time be engaged in pursuits which are prompted by desires. Remember, this is the main difference between the two.

But such difference or conflict between Jñāna and Karma does not necessarily continue eternally. When Karma is not prompted by *kāma* or selfish desire—mind you, I emphasize selfish desire and not all kinds of desire—then technically it is not Karma. Śaṅkara is very clear on this point. He states: suppose a person has begun a certain Vedic sacrifice, a *sakāma karma*, with a desire to get something here or hereafter. He continues that sacrifice for some time, and before it is completed, the desire for gain disappears from his heart, but he just continues and completes the sacrifice only because he does not want to leave it halfway. But now there is no selfish desire at the back of this sacrifice; therefore technically speaking it will not be Karma and will not yield any *phala* or result for him. So we see that action without selfish motive is not Karma, according to Śaṅkara.

Karma without a selfish motive

Now the next question is, suppose we are doing some Karma without a selfish motive, will that not obstruct our Jñāna? Will it not conflict with Jñāna? Certainly not. It is not so stated anywhere in our scriptures. Then what about the *cittasya śuddhaye*

3. Ibid., 3.4.

4. Ibid., 3.5; 18.11.

karma na tu vastūpalabdhaye? We started with that.⁵ According to Śaṅkara *vastūpalabdhī* or realization of the Reality can come only through disappearance of ignorance. And this is possible only when we rightly understand the real nature of the Self. The Self, according to Śaṅkara, cannot be attained through any kind of Karma. Of course, he excludes *nididhyāsana* and *manana* from Karma. All other actions are not helpful for the realization of the ultimate Reality.

What is realization? According to Śaṅkara, realization means that kind of knowledge which is not mixed up with any doubt or any kind of wrong understanding—*asandigdha-jñāna* or *aviparyasta jñāna*. Knowledge which is correct and without any trace of contradiction is absolutely pure knowledge. This is what Śaṅkara understands by realization.

We often hold strange ideas about realization. By realization we often mean something coming all on a sudden in a flash, and the whole world being metamorphosed, a sort of miracle. Let me tell you, Śaṅkara does not believe in such miracles. He is a man who deals with hard facts. If we are to have that kind of knowledge about ourselves, which is not mixed with any kind of doubt or error, it must be attained gradually. It does not come in a flash to anybody. It has to be attained through hard work. Inch by inch we have to progress towards this goal, and the goal is the extreme end of this progress.

I would like to draw your attention to one important point here. Attainment of the kind of knowledge discussed above is not a mere intellectual process, it is a process which involves our whole being. In this process all the three faculties of our being, thinking, feeling and willing, are deeply involved. When all these faculties

of our being are put to work towards this one end of attaining pure knowledge, and if we persevere to the last, then one day it may lead us to the attainment of absolute knowledge, when there will be no trace of any doubt or ignorance in our mind regarding the real nature of the Self.

Śaṅkara thinks there is no place for Karma or action in the process of the highest Realization. In the beginning Karma may be useful. As has been said, *cittasya śuddhaye karma*—Karma is for the purification of the mind. The mind has to be purified, and with this purified mind the highest goal has to be attained.

How far has Karma to be carried on for the purification of the mind? This is the next question. According to Śaṅkara, when the mind is purified, then one will attain the competence for *manana* and *nididhyāsana*, intellectual understanding of the goal and deep meditation. Karma is helpful only up to this stage. When the stages of *manana* and *nididhyāsana* are transcended, Karma has no use any more. It has done its job and should cease as a matter of course. After this, the unfoldment of Jñāna starts. As I have already pointed out, according to Śaṅkara, Karma cannot go up to the last stage of realization.

According to Swami Vivekananda Karma can directly lead us to the highest goal as knowledge and devotion do. Karma is not to be left out at any stage because the very purpose of Karma is purification of the mind. When mind is purified, what more remains to be done? Swamiji says that then the Reality reveals itself spontaneously.

Purification and realization

I would like to draw your attention to this process. Try to understand it. What is keeping us away from the supreme realization? Impurities of the mind. That

⁵. See footnote 1.

is hiding the Reality from us. One example will make it clear to you. The mind is like a glass screen covering the Reality. Now it has been covered with dirt and filth—the filth of desire or *vāsanās*. Unselfish Karma removes the dirt from the screen and makes it transparent. Then what happens? As soon as the glass screen becomes transparent we come face to face with the Reality. The screen practically becomes non-existent. It does not, rather cannot, obstruct the vision of the Reality. There is no separating agency keeping us away from the highest Reality. Sri Ramakrishna said pure *buddhi* and pure *Ātman* are one and the same. Here *buddhi* means *citta* or *antahkaraṇa*, or mind as we call it now in modern terms. It is not only Sri Ramakrishna who said this. Scriptures also give support to this view that, when *citta* becomes absolutely pure, we become one with the ultimate Reality.

It is said that ignorance can be removed only through knowledge, and that knowledge means *brahmākārā vṛtti*, a certain state of the mind, which only can remove ignorance. This is a very technical matter of academic discussion which does not mean much for our practical purposes.

When the mind becomes absolutely pure then it becomes non-mind—*tatra manah amanī bhavati*.⁶ What makes the mind non-mind? According to Swami Vivekananda the process of purification itself makes the mind non-mind. Then there remains nothing to separate us from the ultimate Reality, and thus we realize the Truth and become one with it. Śaṅkara does not accept this theory in principle because he has to establish the supremacy of the path of knowledge.

Saguṇa and nirguṇa experience

According to Sri Ramakrishna and

Swami Vivekananda each one of these paths is fully capable of leading us to the ultimate Reality. But according to Śaṅkara, even devotion does not take one to the highest goal of non-duality. Because in that path you keep yourself distinct from Reality, called *Īśvara*, and remain a devotee. Therefore the duality does not disappear completely in the realization attained through Bhakti.

Suppose the duality does not disappear. What harm is there? If that duality made us low in any way then only it should be shunned. If it does not, but instead gives us a full view of *Īśvara* or the Reality in *Īśvara*, then what is bad in it?

In the path of devotion we use the word *Īśvara* whereas in the path of knowledge we speak of Brahman from which this world has come, in which it exists and into which it would merge. There may be some technical difference between these two concepts about the Reality which might be of use to a Pandit to show his logical skill and competence, but for all practical purposes the difference does not mean anything.

According to Sri Ramakrishna, a devotee can enjoy fully the experience of supreme Love, the experience of the personal God, for ever. Śaṅkara says whenever there is duality, there is a possibility—why possibility, certainty—that the experience is a combination and therefore it must disintegrate sometime.

Not necessarily so, though it is the law in the objective world we are familiar with. This world is impure. But there may be a stage where the impurity completely disappears and in that stage the laws that are operative here will not be operative there. Therefore whatever logic we apply here will not be applicable in that stage. Śaṅkara also has to admit that kind of state where logic is transcended. Logic has to be transcended even to prove Śaṅkara's

⁶ Cf. *Mandukya Karika*, 3.31, 32.

concept of nonduality. When *brahmākārā vṛtti* comes, when one has the idea of non-duality (it is an idea, mind you that idea completely removes the ignorance. But what removes that idea? After all it is an idea, a *vṛtti*, and as such it keeps some distinction. How does that difference disappear? It cannot disappear by itself. Some agency must be there to remove it. What is that agency? Śaṅkara says, 'Oh, it simply disappears just as *nirmaliphala* or alum removes all the impurities from the water and itself gets dissolved into it'. That is no explanation at all. Well, that is not Śaṅkara's ignorance. I don't mean that. He tried to establish a position and he has done it quite correctly. That is not the point here. The point is the difference between Śaṅkara and Swamiji. If the process of knowledge shown by Śaṅkara can eliminate ignorance completely and make one realize the Reality and be one with it, then cannot Karma also do the same? Of course, we mean here Karma performed without any selfish motive, *niṣkāma karma*.

Karma and realization

Śaṅkara admits *niṣkāma karma* makes the mind pure. Why *niṣkāma karma* only? Even *sakāma karma* helps to some extent. That is why it has found a place in the Vedas. Because even *sakāma karma* requires some restraint on our animal propensities. Without restraining the animal propensities we cannot even perform the Vedic Karma. Therefore even such Karma as prescribed by the Vedas for the attainment of some worldly objective, *abhyudaya*, also have a good effect. It makes the mind purer and gives man some control over himself. When this process continues gradually, one becomes unselfish, and when one is completely unselfish, mind you, I give emphasis on that word, then his mind trans-

cends itself. It becomes free from all impurities, does not hide the Reality any more. This point we have to understand properly. This is the idea of *niṣkāma karma* of Swamiji. He has given emphasis on this and it is consistent with the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. The Master too believed in that. Of course, Swamiji has given so much emphasis on this, that we sometimes think that it was not necessary. But if we look back to Swamiji's times, we will find that people then were under the impression that any kind of Karma meant entanglement in *Māyā*. I shall give you an interesting illustration.

Once in Uttarkashi one Sadhu got cholera. When the other Sadhus of the locality came to know of this they simply fled from that place saying that this man would cause *vikṣepa*, distraction, in their meditation. Wonderful meditation theirs must have been! If they went to nurse the man, they might not be able to concentrate on their meditation. They might get some attachment towards that man. So they thought it was better to be free from that attachment and get attached to the *bhikṣā*, alms, that they would get elsewhere! This sort of misunderstanding regarding Karma was common some years ago.

Aloofness from the world

Swamiji saw that in our country people were having too much of this idea of remaining aloof from the world, so that they might become *Jñānis*. Those persons who were the followers of the path of devotion, were also trying to be aloof from the world owing to the same wrong attitude. This is not only not religious practice but definitely irreligious and selfish. It will only add more and more covers on the Reality within us. It will only make ignorance more thick and impenetrable. That is why Swamiji gives so much emphasis on

niṣkāma karma—selfless work. Swamiji told us that through this path of selfless work the country would prosper not only spiritually but also materially. What many people consider to be Sattva is in fact deep Tamas, the quality of darkness, just masquerading as Sattva. This has to be distinguished carefully. They look alike but are poles apart in quality. We have to carefully understand and remember these things.

Little difference between views of Śaṅkara and Swamiji

Śaṅkara and Swamiji may apparently have some theoretical differences, but in fact there is no difference whatsoever. Śaṅkara accepts *niṣkāma karma* as a means to the purification of the mind and Swamiji also does the same. According to Śaṅkara's system of philosophy knowledge is necessary

to remove ignorance. Knowledge brings about the *vṛttijñāna*, the idea of the Self. The idea of the Real alone can remove our ignorance about the Self. That is why it is said that this knowledge in the form of the idea—*brahmākāra vṛtti*—is necessarily the direct cause of realization of the Supreme Reality. This is what Śaṅkara states. Swamiji does not go into these details but says, purify the mind and you will gain realization. There is nothing to intervene between you and the Reality. You are the Reality; the mind itself when purified becomes one with the Reality—the Supreme Self. Because pure *buddhi* and pure Ātman are one and the same thing, as Sri Ramakrishna has said. When you completely purify the mind, you will be what you are seeking. You are the Self, the pure Ātman. This is what Swamiji has taught.

TEILHARD DE CHARDIN AND CREATIVE FREEDOM

DR. BEATRICE BRUTEAU

Teilhard has identified the appearance of freedom as the critical turning point in the course of universal evolution. Up to the level of reflexive consciousness in the human being, evolution seems to have been characterized by a kind of *passivity*, that is, the creatures formed by ever more complex syntheses of matter 'experienced themselves', if one may speak so for the moment, as 'having been evolved'. Evolution was something that had happened to them. They were products of their past.

But when a short circuit was made by the bending back of thought upon itself, the orientation shifted abruptly. The human being stands on a threshold between two realms, one in which we still experience ourselves passively as having been evolved, as products of our past, and one in which

we begin to experience ourselves actively as evolvers, as *agents of our future*.

Why should this be so? Why should reflexivity make possible and result in freedom and deliberate, responsible action? And what will freedom do to the course of evolution, now that it has appeared?

Recurrence and reflexivity

To create is to unite, yet union differentiates. These are the two basic principles of Teilhard's evolutionary system. As they are applied again and again at each stage of the complexifying universe, more and more variegated, active, and comprehensive structures and functions appear. The pattern repeats itself at each level of the development, but each successive level involves a

further dimension. Perhaps the most interesting pattern that recurs is the pattern of reflexivity. The only reflexivity that Teilhard mentions is that of consciousness, but there had been two other significant reflexions before thought appeared.

The first reflexion was self-replication, which was decisive for the full emergence of Life. The extraordinary and novel character of the DNA molecule lies in the fact that it can duplicate itself. It does not merely enlarge itself by adding on repetitions of its formal structure, as any crystal does, assimilating its environment. Nor does it modify its environment by operating as a catalyst to synthesize some other form, afterwards withdrawing to its single self again. Rather, it constructs another individual and separate molecule exactly (barring errors) like its own extremely complicated self. This is the first and minimal form of self-making, *self-establishment by likeness*.

The second reflexion was self-recognition, in the context of other-recognition. This occurs at the level of cells, which are able to distinguish themselves from their food, from other members of their own kind, and from members of other kinds. Much later, when the vertebrates appeared, immune systems developed which were able to identify, to attack, and to remember "other kinds" which were enemies. All of this constitutes what we may call *self-establishment by unlikeness*. The replicating molecule did not only make; it made the maker which could again make. The recognizing cell did not only recognize; it recognized the recognizer as distinct from the recognized which was not the recognizer. These reflexivities, the distinction between likeness and unlikeness, and the action taken against the unlike, are all necessary preparations for the kind of reflexivity that appears in thought and in the first level of freedom, which is choice.

The third reflexion is self-consciousness.

What is consciousness? It is, most generally, probably a matter of responsiveness to environment. But what is 'environment'? What has been developing all through the universal evolution is just this distinction between a 'something' and its 'environment'. 'Environment' cannot be said except by reference to something which is not 'environment'. Consciousness, therefore, may be said to be the distinction between the 'something' and its 'environment'. The more precise, detailed, varied, flexible, subtle, and clear this distinction becomes, the more the consciousness has advanced.

The distinction grows out of action. The organism 'responds' to some 'stimulus' in the environment. The activity is all one smooth cycle. Where did it begin? It is easiest to say it began in the environment. But the distinction develops as the response more and more modifies the environment. Sometimes the cycle can be seen as action originating in the organism, to which the environment 'responds'. But it is still a cycle; every act has its predisposing antecedent.

At the risk of seeming clever, one might suggest that we call the simple responsiveness to environmental stimulus 'consciousness', *knowing*. When a complex set of stimuli can be received, held together and coordinated by the nervous system, and a single response rendered in the face of possible alternative responses, then we might speak of 'con-consciousness', *knowing together* or coordinated and unified knowing. This involves a delay in the smooth cycle of action. An epicycle is formed in the nervous system in which possible courses of action are played out in imagination and all but one discarded. Only then is overt action on the environment resumed.

Self-con-consciousness appears when there is an epicycle on this epicycle, one which regards the first epicycle as 'environment' relative to its particular operation. The knowing activity itself has at this point

become the object of knowledge. And this introduces not merely a delay in the action cycle but a kind of break with it. An independent consciousness, a consciousness not directly connected with the outermost environment, has come into being. This consciousness constitutes a self, but now in this third reflexion a self that is neither like nor unlike the environment. It transcends the environment. At this stage therefore we have *self-establishment by transcendence*.

The self-conscious individual is able to inspect the whole situation, to know that the organism is responding to the environment, that various alternative courses of action are possible and that each of them will result in certain consequences. The consequences can be examined for desirability. Desirability can take different forms, referring to short-range or long-range goals, and involving limited or extensive communities in receipt of the benefits. The benefits can be of different kinds and of different degrees of intensity. All these values the self-conscious being is able to behold *together*; it is also able to know that it is beholding them together and comparing them. They represent alternative courses of action, action which will begin now with a movement on the part of the self-conscious being whose examination of the situation has interrupted the erstwhile smooth flowing stimulus/response cycle. This self-conscious action will be a *choice* amongst alternatives.

This is the first appearance of freedom: *choice-freedom*. It is freedom because the action is not determined by another. The determinism of simple stimulus/response arcs has been definitively transcended by the epi-epicycle of self-consciousness. This is why reflexivity is necessary for freedom. And reflexivity makes possible—and necessary—deliberate action because action has been interrupted by reflexive consciousness and will begin only by the act of the

reflexive consciousness. The self is responsible for the action because the action originates in the self.

But while choice-freedom does begin a new action-cycle, it itself is a response to a situation coming to it from without, and the alternatives among which it chooses are presented to it from without. Thus a still more interior and independent freedom can arise from a deepening of the self-consciousness and a more thorough realization of its transcendence.

It seems that the deeper freedom arises from a reflexion of the last reflexion. Self-consciousness was a regarding of the situation in which the organism responds to the environment. Deepening of this reflexion means regarding the fact of regarding, being conscious of one's transcendence of the stimulus/response cycle. This deeper transcendence results in an independence not only of any particular alternative course of action but of stimulation by alternatives at all.

This deeper freedom simply originates its acts. It is not a question of alternatives or of choices. The act is free because it originates in the agent as its first source. The agent is not stimulated by any form in the environment. Perhaps one could say that the agent is stimulated by the emptiness of the environment which is its proper complement. It is now a question not of choice-freedom, but of *creative-freedom*. And this, the fourth reflexion, brings us to *self-establishment by self-creation*.

What will be the fruits of this creative-freedom? Two or three general kinds of fruits can perhaps be discerned. The first is the one of which Teilhard wrote, the new level entity formed by love-bonding made possible by self-consciousness and freedom. A second is the construction of new thought-worlds, made possible by the realization of our transcendence of what we had supposed to be noetic objectivity. And

a third—if it is distinct from the preceding two—is the creation of creative selfhood itself.

The love-community of freedom

The uniting and differentiating movement of evolution is scheduled to advance yet another step, according to Teilhard, using ourselves as the elements of the projected union. But because we are free beings, we will unite only as a consequence of our free decision. Such a union must therefore be a matter of love. Teilhard generalized the notion of 'love', defining it as 'the affinity of being for being', and pointed out that, so defined, it had a long evolutionary history.

'Affinity' is an attraction, a kind of movement, an energetic action. 'Love', in this view, is an energy-exchange that results in bonding: the strong interaction in the atomic nucleus, the electromagnetic interaction between atoms in a molecule, complex organic and inorganic exchanges constituting the act of living, and so on. At the level of Thought, where the third reflexion produces a transcendent *witness-selfhood*, one that knows that it knows, conscious union becomes possible.

Teilhard believed that being self-conscious and free would enable human persons to join themselves to one another 'centre to centre' in such a way that they would form by their union (with its appropriate internal differentiations) another entity, just as an organism is an organized collectivity of simpler elements. Probably we would grope our way toward it, as evolution has groped its way toward all its other developments.

Perhaps we can trace in human community formation a recurrence of the same steps followed by organic growth in its sequence of reflexions. The first way to form a community is by simple reproduction. The family, the clan, and the tribe are united and

establish their selfhood by their *likeness*. Almost concurrently, of course, they react to the presence of strangers, members of other tribes, as enemies, and deepen their sense of selfhood by this recognition of *unlikeness*. These two ways of establishing group selfhood are very much with us to this day, operating not only between families but between social classes, nations, races, political and religious affiliations. The sense of 'we' is defined and strengthened by the correlative sense of 'they'.

The energy bonding here is love of the type called *eros*. It is an energy movement which goes out from the lover, encompasses the beloved, and returns to the lover, for it seeks the good of the lover. That which is loved is loved because it is good for the lover. 'The lover' may be an extended ego, such as the family, the nation, the race, or the religious or political community. But the pattern of the energy movement as it acts to establish, define, and strengthen the selfhood of the 'lover', will be the same.

There is a certain amount of freedom and deliberation in this type of community formation, but it does not yet answer to Teilhard's prophecy of a new level Being, created by a universal convergence.

The new Being is really the result of the fourth reflexion, the one in which the sense of personal *transcendence* is deepened to the point where action can originate from the agent itself without stimulation from the environment. The fourth reflexion produces an *agent-self* (as distinguished from the witness-self of the third reflexion) which does not need to establish itself by reference to the environment, not even by the reference of being able to choose among alternative courses of action presented by the environment. It does not identify or define itself by what it is like or what it is unlike. It, so to speak, merely says 'I am', or reflexively, 'I am who am.'

However, precisely at that point of its

self-being and its reflexive knowledge of its self-being, the agent-self also says, 'May you be'. It does this because it is the nature of person to be interpersonal. But an *agent*-self cannot be defined by its passivity with respect to other persons; therefore its relation to them must be active. Since it does not seek to bolster its own being by gaining some benefit from others—that would be to engage in the eros movement of the witness-self, implying passivity and dependence—it must relate to others by giving to others such goods as it has to give: that is, by willing that their being should be enhanced.

This form of affinity, or love-bonding, is called *agape*. It is an energy movement that goes out from the lover, enters into the beloved, unites with the beloved, and remains to dwell in the beloved, for it seeks the good of the beloved. That which is loved is loved because it is good for the beloved. (When this love is mutual, the lover's good is also willed, of course, but by another.)

We may note here how this type of love corresponds to the nature of the self indicated by the fourth reflexion. *Agape* is a love of the beloved not because of any merit in the beloved; it is not a response to some stimulus in the environment. It arises from the lover as from a first source and moves toward the beloved's good which does not yet exist, that is, toward the future. It is an exercise of *creative freedom*, something beyond mere choice-freedom. It relates itself creatively to the beloved by willing that the beloved be and be abundantly, and this same act creates the lover, for it exercises and strengthens the lover's proper kind of being, which is to be such an agent of *agape*. Selfhood is established by this creative act: simultaneously the selfhood of the beloved, the selfhood of the lover, and the selfhood of the community created by the energy-union between them.

This community—and now we must think

of it as involving many persons—is created entirely by freedom. It has no ulterior motives, no self-seeking exclusions, no reservations in the self-donation by which it sets its affinity bonds and constitutes itself as a profoundly united, deeply sharing, living super-person.

It is interesting to try to see what has happened to 'selfhood' as such in this new life. Each constituent element-self identifies itself by saying, as it were, 'I am I insofar as I give myself to you, will your welfare, dwell in you, identify my life with yours'. But the 'you' in question is also doing the same thing with respect to its neighbours, including the first self. The movement of the love-energy is circular in every possible way, for each loves each, each indwells every other. It reminds one of the *perichoresis* (*circumincession*) of the Trinity, and no doubt it would please Teilhard to hear it so described.

In this way the real meaning of the fourth reflexion becomes clear. The deeper the personal self goes into its apparently individual selfhood, the more it finds that it is an out-pouring selfhood. And the more the out-pouring selfhood realizes its proper nature and exercises itself, the more the community selfhood is built up. But the more the community selfhood is built up by this exercise of personal selfhood, the more the personal selfhood is realized as itself. There is a kind of *self-making selfhood* here, which simultaneously creates both the elemental selfhood and the community, or new entity, selfhood. To be an element-self of this type is to be every other elemental self in the community and the universal self of the new entity as well. There is a full reflexion of the self in the environment—that is, in all that is apparently not the self—and of the environment in the self.

Only from the limited and undeveloped point of view of the eros self does this arrangement appear to be a loss of selfhood,

something to be feared as a blurring of being in a vague ocean. It is in the face of this fear that the promise is made that whoever is willing to lose *that* self will find the larger one.

The knowledge-world of freedom

A parallel fruit of the freedom attained by the fourth reflexion can be identified in our cognitive lives. Our common sense view of our knowing activity tells us that the goal of knowledge is to know things as they really are, as they are in themselves (whether we are engaged in knowing them or not). Since there is only one way that the object of our knowing can actually *be* in itself, there is only one right answer to our question, 'How is it?' The object's self-being determines this one right answer, and our job is simply to discover and receive it. This is the theory of noetic objectivity, and the common sense view recommends it as the ideal of knowledge. Analogously to the distinction we introduced earlier, this is knowing as 'sciousness', and for simple items of knowledge such as we meet in our everyday lives it is valid and adequate.

However, when it comes to somewhat more complex and comprehensive items, we as knowers cannot always agree on how the world is. Various communities amongst us see surprisingly different versions of what we thought should be the same world. Those who see similarly tend to form themselves into communities; and, of course, it also happens that those who are already living together in community will tend to develop similar views of the world. Thus we have ethnic and language groups, political and religious communities, scientific and philosophical schools of thought, and so on.

In fact, what makes the members of each community so sure that their particular way of seeing the world is correct is precisely that the rest of their community agrees with them.

It is not usually admitted that this is the source of the sureness. It is usually claimed that the object known has determined the knowledge without any contribution by the knowing subject. Subjective 'error', or 'bias', or (very tolerantly) 'immaturity' is instead attributed to those communities whose views are different.

If there is enough *general* agreement about how the world is to be perceived to enable rival communities to test their respective views on some *particular* item by mutually acceptable criteria, it may happen that one community will be converted to the viewpoint of the other and acknowledge its former position as 'erroneous'. But this conversion, or determination of 'error', must take place within the context of agreed upon views.

These judgements, which are reached as conclusions after being challenged and tested, are instances of 'con-sciuousness' (again analogously to our earlier distinction), a knowing-together in community. They are choices made among alternatives, and thus there is some transcendence and some exercise of freedom, even if this is not recognized or acknowledged. The knower is aware of knowing and of the problematic dimension of the act of knowing, but still regards knowing as an act of the witness-self who simply responds to the object, whose truth is—after some confusion—determined by the world.

What is analogous to 'self-con-sciuousness' in the act of knowing is the transcendent realization that the knower does make a choice among alternative views of the world. This becomes especially clear when the knower reflects on the fact that sometimes it is not possible to reduce the views of one community to those of another, or to demonstrate within an agreed upon context that the views of one community are 'erroneous' with respect to the views of another. The knower observes that each

community is living successfully with its particular view of the world and is not being forced by the 'objective' world to confess to a 'mistake'. The various 'subjective' perspectives are themselves being supported by the 'objective' world. The object is not completely determining the subject. The subject is exercising a definite degree of freedom with respect to the worldview chosen from among the many sustained by the objective world.

At this stage of development we have a situation analogous to the *choice-freedom* discussed above. *Creative freedom* emerges when the transcendent reflecting consciousness moves to the further level of reconsidering what knowledge *ought to be*. The ideal of noetic objectivity urged that the knowing self ought to be uniquely determined to hold one particular view of the world which would correspond to the one particular way in which the world itself actually exists. But observation and experience—even on this assumption—have shown that the 'way the world is' is such that it *does not uniquely determine* particular views of itself. This paradox remains an impasse only as long as we hold to the assumption that the ideal of knowledge is to have a uniquely determined worldview.

The deeply transcendent reflexive consciousness characteristic of the fourth reflexion surveys this situation and realizes its freedom to abandon not only particular worldviews but also the previously held ideal of knowledge and of the knowing self. The knowing self comes then to know itself as a creative interaction with the world which can take the initiative in shaping viable worldviews, and the knowing self comes to acknowledge that such creative interaction is precisely the way in which the act of knowledge *ought to be* performed. The agent-knower-self knows itself as participating in forming its own world-as-known, and knows that this is not an admission of defi-

ciency in the knower's power to know reality, but is an insight into the nature of reality.

'Subject' and 'object' are not so separated from one another as we had thought, nor is their relation so non-reciprocal. On the contrary, they may be seen as mutually indwelling one another, parallel to the full reflexion of the self in the (supposed) non-self attained by creative love. The more the subject attempts to know the objective world 'as it is' (supposedly without contribution by the knower), the more the subject comes to know that 'the way it is' is that subjects make creative contributions to the shaping of the thought-worlds that their communities live in. Thus, the more the objective world determines the subject, the more it reveals that the subject's own determining activity is present within the world, and thus the more it forces the subject to acknowledge its freedom and to exercise its creativity in order to attain truth and reality. And the more the subject exercises creative freedom and reflects on its nature as a creative knower, the more it attains the world as it really is.

Self-made selfhood and the creation of creativity

As the universe evolves to ever greater complexity and consciousness, we can trace the development of selfhood from self-establishment by likeness, by unlikeness, by transcendence (neither likeness nor unlikeness), to self-establishment by self-creation. All along this line, the ratio of activity to passivity has steadily increased. The highly complex and conscious elements of the universe—in particular, ourselves—now make significant contributions to their own complexity and consciousness. We knowingly and wilfully complexify our personal lives and endeavour to elevate our consciousness.—In fact, for us now, 'complexity' means *complexity of our consciousness*, for social

relations (including interpersonal, emotional, political, and even certain types of higher order economic relations, as in credit and the 'supermoney' of stock market prices) are essentially *structures of consciousness*.—We are establishing ourselves as selves by the fact that the self that is being 'produced', by free acts of knowledge and love, is coincident with the self that is its 'producer'.

But what is 'selfhood'? I said earlier that consciousness is a distinction between 'something' and its 'environment', and this is how we first experience selfhood. In the selfhood of the fourth reflexion, selfhood has become highly involuted and convoluted. The loving self finds itself precisely in sympathetic coincidence with the selfhood of 'the other'. The knowing self finds itself as the one who determines the 'object' of its act of knowing, thus embedding the subject in the object and locating the object in the subject. In each case it seems that the self has effectively assimilated its 'environment', the supposed not-self.

What has really happened is that the whole nature of 'selfhood' and 'environmenthood' has changed with the advent of freedom, self-consciousness, and deliberate creativity. Creativity on the part of human

beings involves constructing the environment in such a way that the environment and the self become mutually indwelling elements in a common reality. Furthermore, the creative act creates not only the environment as an intimate relation of the self, but creates the self-as-creator of a new relation of self and environment. Thus, we are now engaged in creating our environment, thereby creating ourselves, *and* creating our now unique and novel type of selfhood, which consists of this newly created *relation* of self and environment.

But even this is not the furthest reach of the fourth reflexion. What we may say in the end is that we are presently engaged in *creating creativity*—not only its means but its methods, and not only these, but the nature and significance of creativity in our lives.

All this has come about because of the successive and recurring patterns of reflexivity which finally reached the level of self-consciousness and freedom. This enabled the passive creature to become an active creator. The final fruit of this reflexion and this freedom has been that evolution has evolved a free evolver who has creatively evolved a new type of evolution.

KARMA AND CHARACTER

SWAMI SATYARUPANANDA

Swami Vivekananda observes in his lectures on Karma Yoga :

All the actions that we see in the world, all the movements in human society, all the works that we have around us are simply the display of thought, the manifestation of the will of man. Machines or instruments, cities, ships or men-of-war, all these are simply the manifestation of the will of man; and this will is caused by character and character is manufactured by Karma. As is Karma so is the manifestation of the will.¹

Man is the product of his own karma. All his actions, attitudes, thoughts and feelings have been shaped by his past Karma. If our present is the result of our past actions, it is logical to conclude that our future will depend upon our present actions. And as we know, it is character that raises man above the beasts, and it is character that manifests the potential divinity of man and makes him a veritable God.

Before attempting to show how Karma shapes character, let us study the meaning of the terms 'karma' and 'character'.

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977), Vol. I., p. 30

Karma

The word 'Karma' means two things: action and its effect. Says Swami Vivekananda: 'The word Karma is derived from the Sanskrit *kr*, to do. All action is Karma. Technically this word also means the effects of actions. In connection with metaphysics it sometimes means the effects, of which our past actions were the causes.'²

For our present purpose we shall accept 'work' as the meaning of the term 'Karma'. The importance of work in our life needs no mention. The whole edifice of human civilization has been built through work. Work has changed the very face of our planet and has made it a living fairy land. It is through work that man has dived deep into the fathomless depth of his own being and has brought out the wisdom which has made him immortal.

Character

Character is an ambiguous term which has been used by scholars and writers in a variety of senses. In literature it is used to denote a particular personality. Biologists use it to mean the peculiar feature of a certain organism; as for instance in a phrase like inherited character. Character is generally used as synonymous to personality. In this sense also it signifies some special characteristic of a man or woman.

But this is not the complete meaning of the term character. Although character includes the psychosomatic part of human personality; it means something more than it. Character is a higher and deeper aspect of human being. It does not mean only the manifestation of psychophysical function, but also involves the ethical and spiritual aspects of man. Gordon W. Allport observes in his famous book *Personality*: "Therefore, instead of defining

character as the volitional aspect of personality it is sounder to admit frankly that it is an ethical concept."³ He further quotes Sir John Adams as saying 'character is the moral estimate of the individual, an evaluation.'

McDougall says, 'character is a complex organization.' The term 'complex organization' signifies some qualities which though abstract in themselves give us some concrete idea of character. The great psychologist himself explains it :

In spite, then, of the confused and backward state of this part of psychology there is a considerable convergence of opinion and usage that justifies the use of the word character to point to something within us that expresses itself in volition, in higher forms of action and control of action, something which since it gradually takes shape within us in the course of the battle of life and since it is liable also to disintegration must be a complex organization.⁴

Character is an integral whole which is the result of so many factors of human life, past and present. Swami Vivekananda takes it to mean the aggregate of a man's past tendencies:

As pleasure and pain pass before his soul they have upon it different pictures, and the result of these combined impressions ... is what is called man's character. If you take the character of any man, it really is but the aggregate of tendencies, the sum total of the bent of his mind.⁵

Thus we see that character is a complex organization, an aggregated whole resulting from the physical, mental, moral and spiritual actions of an individual. Therefore we can say that in essence character is the integration of personality and the way the

2. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 1, p. 27.

3. Gordon W. Allport, *Personality* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1956), p. 52.

4. *The Energies of Man*. William McDougall, fourth edition. p. 188.

5. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 1, p. 27.

inherent divinity of the soul is manifested in day-to-day life. It reaches its culmination when man fully realizes his divinity and becomes freed from all bondage.

How character is built

We have the power within us to remake ourselves. The proper application of this power towards a higher end produces character. Character is a process of reorganization of our whole being. It is not the product of an automatic natural evolutionary process like the instinct or physical characteristic of an organism. Character is something which is built by a process of conscious organization of our whole being towards a definite higher end. When a man or woman consciously strives to attain certain high moral and spiritual qualities, refrains from immoral (and unspiritual) activities, and tries to integrate his or her personality, then only will character be built. Volition is an important factor in building character. Conscious and wilful effort towards reorganization of personality and attainment of the highest end of human life is an unavoidable aspect of the character-building process.

The process of character-building

The ancient Indian R̥sis and Yogis probed very deep into human nature and discovered fundamental principles of character-formation. Called *yama* and *niyama*, these principles form the foundation of the whole yoga system. They found that character is formed by habits, and that by changing one's habits one's character can be transformed.

It is said that character is a bundle of habits, and we know that habits are formed by repeated actions. A little observation will reveal that the action which has become automatic today was not so in the beginning.

There was a time when the action was difficult, and required conscious effort. If a man repeats a certain kind of action for sufficient number of times, that action becomes easy or 'natural' for him. After sometime he needs no conscious effort to do the action, it has become automatic. This kind of established action is called habit. The total of such established habits is the character of a man.

Another important point to be noted in this phenomenon is that there was at first a conscious thought behind the action. A mental process was also involved in the action. This process left behind an impression in the mind. Every time the action was repeated, a similar mental impression was also created in the mind. These impressions caused by our actions on our minds are called *samskāras* in the Hindu system of psychology. Says Swami Vivekananda :

Samskāra can be translated very nearly by 'inherent tendency'. Using the simile of a lake for the mind, every ripple, every wave that rises in the mind, when it subsides does not die out entirely, but leaves a mark and future possibility of that wave coming out again. This mark with the possibility of the wave reappearing, is what is called 'Samskāra'. Every work that we do, every movement of the body, every thought that we think, leaves such an impression on the mind stuff, and even when such impressions are not obvious on the surface they are sufficiently strong to work beneath the surface, subconsciously. What we are every moment is determined by the sum total of these impressions on the mind. What I am just at this moment is the effect of the sum total of all the impressions of my past life. This is really what is meant by character.⁶

It is clear from the above analysis of character by Swamiji that Karma or action is the real force behind that builds our character. Karma is a neutral power; it can make or mar its doer depending on the

6. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 1, p. 54.

direction he gives to this tremendous force. The life of every man depends upon how he uses this force of Karma and to achieve what end.

Karma in general can be divided into two categories: good and bad. Good Karma produces good result in life and bad Karma produces bad result in life. Similarly good Karmas produce good mental impressions and bad Karmas produce bad mental impressions. Good impressions on their part goad us to do more and more good Karma and bad impressions urge us to do bad Karma. Thus Karma and *samskāra* together constitute a cyclic process which lies at the very foundation of character formation. The first step towards building a good character is to use this tremendous power of Karma to produce good impressions on our mind. But this cannot be done unless we fix a lofty ideal for our life itself. Because it is the ideal which stimulates our sentiments and emotions and inspires our will to strive for the attainment of the ideal. Thus keeping a lofty ideal for our life around which we can build our character is the primary condition of building a good character.

The place of the ideal in character formation

It is the ideal which gives meaning to our life and direction to our Karma. The ideal is the very purpose to which life itself is devoted. The eminent psychologist J. A. Hadfield says: 'The ideal is that, the attainment of which produces completeness and self-realization'.⁷ The ideal is a conceptual goal the attainment of which quenches all the longings of the soul, and gives it a sense of fulfilment. Craving for completeness and fulfilment is the basic

urge of the human soul. The true ideal when it is realized must satisfy completely this basic urge of the soul.

The eternal quest of the soul cannot be quenched by ephemeral things, however great and grand they may be. Spiritual knowledge and Self-realization is the only thing which can completely satisfy this basic urge of the human soul and can give it a sense of completeness and fulfilment. Therefore, the only ideal on the basis of which personality can be integrated and an excellent character can be built is the spiritual ideal, the ideal of Self-realization. And since all individual souls are part of an absolute Reality or God, Self-realization means God-realization. Of course, there are ideals other than the ideal of God-realization which have inspired men and women to build their character and integrate their personality. For example, the ideal of patriotism, or social reform or political achievement. A question may be asked here: are these ideals not sufficient for building a perfect and excellent character?

The answer would be negative. Because the essential quality of an ideal is that it must produce completeness and fulfilment when it is realized. If we examine the character of those persons who have built their character around these ideals divorced from the spiritual ideal of God-realization, we shall find that their character has developed only in one direction at the expense of some other lofty sides of human personality. This kind of one-sided character may ultimately lead them to dissatisfaction with life, frustration and even to utter ruin. The lives of Hitler and Mussolini show how the pursuit of a lower ideal can pervert human character and cause suffering to untold millions.

Any ideal, however grand and great it might be, if divorced from the spiritual ideal is bound to produce bigotry and narrow-mindedness in man in due course, thus

⁷ J.A. Hadfield, *Psychology and Morals* (London : Methuen and Co. 1949), p. 97.

crippling his all-round development of personality and ultimately leading to spiritual ruin. On the other hand, if these national, political or social ideals are blended with the spiritual ideal of God-realization, they can be made the proper means to attain the supreme end. When these ideals are made the *means* instead of the goal and are subordinated to the supreme ideal of God-realization they produce a Gandhi, an Aurobindo, or a Tilak whose lives were a boon to humanity and a blessing to themselves.

Thus we see that an all-round personality and a perfect character cannot be built unless it has a spiritual ideal as its basis.

Part played by the will

Character-building is a twofold process, namely, negative and positive. We have observed in the beginning that volition plays a very important role in the process of character-building. As soon as the ideal is fixed, man has to examine himself and see what emotions, sentiments and qualities are there in his personality which are congenial to the ideal; and what are the sentiments, emotions and actions which oppose the ideal and may become obstacles in the way of realization of the ideal. At the very outset man has to control those emotions and sentiments which may hamper his progress towards the realization of the ideal, and has to give up those actions which are detrimental to the building of good character.

Here comes the need of volition or will; only finding out good and bad qualities or sentiments and emotions in one's personality is not enough to build one's character. Man has to exert his will power and has to control those emotions and sentiments which are detrimental to the ideal and has to cultivate and culture those sentiments and emotions which are helpful to building good character. We shall not examine here the

views of philosophers regarding the will, its metaphysical meaning, the extent of its freedom, etc. We shall simply try to see how will functions and how we can use it to realize our ideal.

For all practical purposes will may be regarded as the function of one part of the *citta* (mind as a whole). When an ideal appeals to our being, it stimulates a strong desire in us to respond to it. This desire being supported by sentiments and emotions becomes so intense and dominant that it subordinates and subdues all other sentiments and emotions not congenial to the ideal and inspires us to do such acts and to cherish such sentiments and emotions as are congenial to the ideal. At this stage the intense desire becomes will. This will is further strengthened by constant use and practice. When the appealing ideal first stimulates a desire it is likely to be opposed by the forces of past habit. At this stage the desire has not become the will. The forces of habit try to subdue the incipient will and tempt the man to surrender to them and follow the old rut. But those who want to build good character do not yield to them, but resolve more strongly to fight against them. They continually exercise the incipient will every time they are tempted, and through repeated practice forge a strong and powerful will. A fully developed mature will becomes a permanent faculty of such a man's mind. Thus through practice man creates his will and gains more and more strength. His old habits gradually lose their power of dragging the man against his will.

How long has man to exert and exercise his will in order to subdue those tendencies that tempt him to do things that debase him and corrupt his character? When can we say that a man has been established in good character? Swami Vivekananda has given us the criterion of a fully formed character. The great Swami observes :

When a man has done so much good work and thought so many good thoughts then there is an irresistible tendency in him to do good in spite of himself and even if he wishes to do evil, his mind as the sum total of his tendencies will not allow him to do so; the tendencies will turn him back; he is completely under the influence of good tendencies. When such is the case, a man's good character is said to be established.⁸

This is the standard by which we have to judge our character. We have to examine ourselves and see what are the tendencies that are prominent in our character. We have to find out what is the basic motive behind our actions. There must be constant self-examination and introspection in our life. Character formation is a continuous process and we have to be always alert. If our good tendencies are becoming stronger day by day, then we may say we are advancing in the right direction towards the establishment of good character.

Intensify good deeds and thoughts

Man discovered the laws governing electricity, and by applying those laws became the master of that tremendous power. Now he is using it as his servant. Likewise, if a man knows the laws that govern the mind he can control it by applying those laws and can make the best use of its power to realize his ultimate goal.

Swami Vivekananda tells us, 'When persons do evil actions they become more and more evil and when they begin to do good, they become stronger and stronger and learn to do good at all times.'⁹ We may therefore take it as the basic law of character formation that by repeating good actions and thinking good thoughts again and again a good character gets established. While commenting on the 12th aphorism

of the first chapter of Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtra* Swami Vivekananda has beautifully explained this law. To quote his words:

Why should we practise? Because each action is like pulsations quivering over the surface of the lake. The vibration dies out, and what is left? Samskāras, the impressions. When a large number of these impressions are left on the mind, they coalesce and become a habit. It is said, 'Habit is second nature', it is first nature also, and the whole nature of man; everything that we are is the result of habit. That gives us consolation, because if it is only habit, we can make and unmake it at any time. The Samskāras are left by these vibrations passing out of our mind, each one of them leaving its result. Our character is the sum total of these marks, and according as some particular wave prevails, one takes that tone. If good prevails one becomes good; if wickedness one becomes wicked; if joyfulness one becomes happy. The only remedy for bad habits is counter habits; all the bad habits that have left their impression are to be controlled by good habits. Go on doing good, thinking holy thoughts continuously: that is the only way to suppress bad impressions. Never say any man is hopeless, because he only represents a character, a bundle of habits, which can be checked by new and better ones. Character is repeated habits and repeated habits alone can reform character.¹⁰

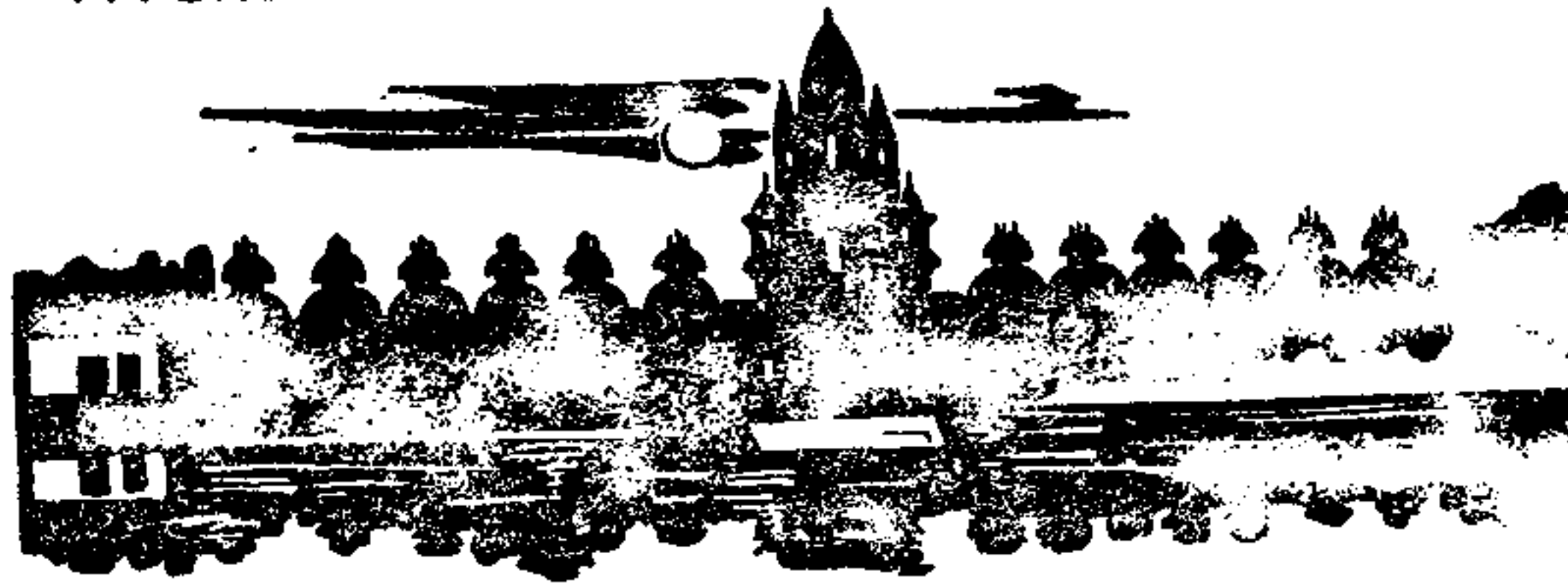
This is the redeeming message even for the lowest sinner in the world. Whatever sins a man might have committed, he is never doomed for ever. He is not condemned to an eternal hell. Every sinner in the world has a future. It is his bad Karma that has made him a sinner. But every bad Karma can be counteracted by good Karma. Every bad tendency can be controlled by a good tendency. If the bad Karmas have made our character bad, good Karmas can equally unmake it, and can make our character good. This is a message of great encouragement and hope. In whatever condition of life and in whatever

(Continued on page 475)

8. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 54-55.

9. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 1, p. 81.

10. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 207-8.



THREE GREAT MYSTICS OF ISLAM

PROF. RANJIT KUMAR ACHARJEE

Sufism, the name usually given to Islamic mysticism, is mainly a practical spiritual discipline which is based on the spiritual insights and direct experiences of illumined souls, though it has its own theological framework which is in overall conformity with the basic tenets of orthodox Islam. Like mystics belonging to different religions of the world, Sufis believe that Truth can be realized within, for which discursive reason is inadequate inasmuch as it distorts the unity of truth and reality. Sufism, it should be noted, is a particular method of approach to Reality (*al-Haqq*, its term for God) through love (*mahabba*). It is in and through love that we become one with the Reality, who is the Divine Beloved, and it is in this union of love that the mystery of the whole universe is revealed to us. Hence Sufism is mainly a cult of love-mysticism or devotional mysticism of the Vaiṣṇavite type. Says one Western scholar, 'It is not primarily an intellectual process, though the experience of the mystic led to the formulation of various types of philosophy, but rather a reaction against the external rationalization of Islam in law and systematic theology, aiming at spiritual freedom whereby man's intrinsic intuitive spiritual senses could be allowed full scope.'¹

Psychologically, Sufism represents the deep-rooted craving of the human heart for a personal and intimate union with the Divine through love and devotion.

Sufism is a powerful mystic movement with a long history. We have already given a short account of the historical development and basic tenets of Sufism in an earlier issue of this journal.² The object of the present article is very limited : to study the lives and teachings of three eminent Sufi saints, namely, al-Hallāj, al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Arabi. The reason for selecting these from the galaxy of Sufi saints is that they may well be regarded as three prominent pillars of Sufism who contributed largely to the enrichment of Sufi theology, ethics and philosophy.

Mansur al-Hallāj is the great Sufi seer who introduced the doctrine of personal deification or divinity of man in Sufi literature and philosophy. Al-Hallāj, the mystic poet, was born in Persia in 858 A.D. He was the son of a Zoroastrian. He was a junior contemporary and disciple of al-Junaid, whom he met in Baghdad. After spending about six years in his society, al-Hallāj left him under the conviction that he had already ascended the level of union with God. He became a roaming preacher and set out on travels which took him to India. There-

1. J. S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 1.

2. See *Prabuddha Bharata*, September, 1981.

after, he went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and returned to Baghdad in 908 A.D. Al-Hallāj believed that mystic intuition was the only means of union with God. Further, he was very much convinced of the divinity of the human soul, and as such he did not hesitate to declare that man should be viewed as the very God incarnate. Though he did not claim divinity for himself, his very utterance *ana-l Haqq* ('I am the Truth') was not looked upon with favour by the orthodox ulemas who interpreted the expression as implying divine incarnation for al-Hallāj himself. In al-Hallāj, we have a shining example of a God-intoxicated Sufi. He was wholly absorbed in serving the will of God and this made him oblivious of the consequences which might follow from the pronouncement he made. As a result, he was accused of being a heretic by the Abbāsid inquisition. For eight years, he languished in the prison. After trial lasting for seven months, he was found guilty and sentenced to death and hanged on March 26, 922 A.D.; then his corpse was decapitated and burned. His death made him a great Sufi martyr. The opening line of one of his hymns 'Kill me, O my trustworthy friends, for in my being killed is my life' became a message of courage to Sufis throughout the ages. The tomb on his grave in west Baghdad is still respected as that of a saint. Al-Hallāj's mystic theory is made clear in the following verses.

I am He whom I love, and He whom I love is I.
We are two souls dwelling in one body.
When thou seest me, thou seest Him :
And when thou seest Him, thou seest us both.³

If we closely analyse the above, it will be seen that al-Hallāj speaks of the unity of man and God through love which binds them together. Love is the essence of God.

3. R. A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge : University Press, 1921), p. 80.

It is in love that we become one with the Divine Reality. The ultimate reality resides within this human form as our true self or the ultimate essence. Before creation, God was all alone and He loved only Himself since there was none else. Then for beholding that 'love-in-aloneness' as an external object, He brought into existence an image of Himself and endowed it with all His attributes. This divine image is Adam, in and by whom God is made manifest. Thus, divinity is objectified in humanity.⁴ This is the mystery as well as the meaning of creation and divinity of man; this is the significance of regarding man as potentially divine. This reminds us of the Upaniṣadic text, 'In the beginning (before creation) there was Being alone, One without a second. Then He thought, let me become many.'⁵ Man has thus within his nature two aspects of existence, his human personality (*nāsūt*) and his divine personality (*lāhūt*). Man suffers from the pangs of separation, when he is obsessed by the wrong notion of dualism between his human personality and the Divine in him. Clearly, the ultimate goal of man upon earth lies in Self-realization which is the same as God-realization. This was the experience which inspired the Upaniṣadic sages to declare 'know thyself' (*Ātmānam viddhi*). Socrates in ancient Greece had also persistently advocated the supreme importance of self-knowledge. When al-Hallāj declares, *ana-l Haqq*—'I am the Truth'—he affirms that truth is not to be found elsewhere; truth is in man and each man can discover that he is a potential candidate for divine status. The Upaniṣadic sayings 'This self is Brahman', 'I am Brahman', and 'That thou art',

⁴ *Hasting's Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 12, p. 14.

⁵ सदेव सोम्येदमग्र आसीदेकमेवाद्वितीयम् ।

... तदैक्षत बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति ... ॥

Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 6.2.1-3.

expressed the same truth long ago in a more forthright and illuminating manner.

It should, however, be remembered in this connection that al-Hallāj maintained a certain distinction between the divine and human natures. Even in the moment of mystic realization, some personality persists. 'Divinity is infused and not confused with humanity.'⁶ In view of this, we do not discern many pantheistic elements in his thought which were attributed to him by many subsequent Sufis and Western writers. Though subsequently Ibn al-Arabi re-interpreted some of the expressions of al-Hallāj to bring them in line and spirit with the orthodox Islamic view, yet the magnitude of the debt which Sufism owes to al-Hallāj should not be minimized.

In this spirit of Hallāj, Sufism is closely related to Upaniṣadic mysticism, although the concept of love, which occupies such a vital position in Sufism is not so emphasized in the Upaniṣads. The discovery of this fact prompted Dārā Shikoh, the eldest son of Emperor Shahjahan to write a book entitled *The Meeting of the Two Oceans of Sufism and Vedanta*. It is interesting to note in this connection that the great poet Rabindranath Tagore, whose entire gamut of literary creation was inspired and illumined by the Upaniṣadic teachings, sings like the Sufi mystic al-Hallāj, the unity of human personality and divine personality in man. 'Through all his songs and poems Tagore sings of an Infinite Being, who is seeking His self-expression through the whole creative process for self-realization—and the best expression of the divine personality is through the human personality, and throughout the life-process of man is going on this continual process of love-making between the human and the Divine. This human personality, and Divine personality, both of

which remain combined in the nature of man, are the "I" and the "you", the "lover" and the "Beloved" so much spoken of by Tagore in his songs and poems.'⁷

Prof. Massignon, a French scholar who wrote a massive and valuable book on al-Hallāj and rendered many obscure points of Hallāj's thought intelligible, maintained that Hallāj's doctrine exhibited some remarkable affinities with Christianity. But we find more striking similarities with Vedanta than with Christianity and hence the observation made by M. Horten, a German scholar, that third century (A.H.) Sufism was more identical with the doctrines of Vedanta, appears to be more acceptable.⁸

Abu Hamid al-Ghazālī, the greatest thinker of Islam, 'the hujjat (proof) of Islam', was born in 1058 A.D. at Tus, Khurasan. He spent the early years of his life in this north Persian province. He lost his father when young and was educated and brought up by a faithful Sufi friend of his father. In school, his special field of study was theology and jurisprudence. 'Then', says Ghazālī, 'we went to the college to learn divinity so that we might gain our livelihood'. In course of time, he established himself as a leading sunni scholar of his day. In 1091 A.D. he was appointed professor of theology at the Nizāmiya college in Baghdad, where he made his mark as a professor and consulting lawyer. It should be remembered in this connection that from his very youth al-Ghazālī was seized by an intense and sincere desire for knowledge, and this impelled him to study every form of religion and philosophy. This thirst for knowledge made him question all whom he met concerning the nature of truth and reality. But he was not satisfied with the

⁶ *Hasting's Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 12, p. 15.

⁷ Dr. S. B. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults* (Calcutta: Firma K.L.M., 1976), p. 187.

⁸ R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge: University Press, 1956), Appendix, p. 475. (Hereafter *Literary History*).

solutions they offered. He became restless intellectually and turned a sceptic. 'For two months', says Ghazālī, 'I was actually, though not avowedly, a sceptic.' Dissatisfied with the intellectual and legalistic approach to religion, he came to realize that philosophy and natural theology could not in fact conclusively prove the existence of God, or solve the mystery of the creation of the world, the immortality of soul, the structure of the universe, divine providence and other problems.

After four years of service in the Nizāmiya College, he retired voluntarily in 1095 A.D. and suddenly left Baghdad. Then he turned into a confirmed Sufi. The famous story of his conversion to Sufism is narrated in his spiritual autobiography *Al-munqidh min-ad-dalāl*. ('Deliverer from Error'). Nothing is known about his teacher or the mystical tradition to which he belonged. After retirement from service, he roamed as a dervish enjoying peace and tranquility of mind. For about twelve years, he wandered from place to place, including two years' retreat in Syria and a holy pilgrimage. Then he returned to Baghdad to preach and teach. He led a simple life as a mystic and wholly devoted to study and composition of books. The large number of books which he wrote greatly enriched Sufi philosophy and literature. Of these works, *Ihyā ulūm ad-Din* ('Revival of Religious Sciences') was his masterpiece written between 1096-1102 A.D. He spent the last days of his life in his native city Tus and died there at the age of 54 on December 19, 1111 A.D.

In his works, Ghazālī discussed and elucidated various moral, metaphysical and mystical doctrines with a view to reconciling Sufism with Moslem orthodoxy. He applied the rational method in interpreting the dogmas and doctrines of religion and thus made Sufism palatable to the orthodox school of theologians. In these works, he sought to prove that 'the Muslim life of

devotion to the one God could not be lived perfectly save by following the Sufi way'.⁹ Though al-Ghazālī accepted the main Sufi position and gave a new meaning both to Islam and Sufism, yet he maintained a close link with Islam by showing his deep reverence for religious law, and by advocating the notion of personal God as against the pantheistic notion of divine Being. For this reason the eminent scholar Prof. R. A. Nicholson is unwilling to accept him as a 'typical sufi'. Be that as it may, al-Ghazālī, is the most outstanding scholar and spiritual leader within the fold of Sufism. Al-Ghazālī's works as suggested earlier, are of outstanding merit and bear clear testimony of his extraordinary scholarship, rare capacity for synthesis and profound spiritual realization. His influence was far-reaching and permanent both inside and outside the Muslim world. Many subsequent Sufis regarded him as their spiritual leader and some Sufi orders are said to have been developed on his teachings. Mr. Duncan B. Macdonald while discussing Ghazālī's influence in Islam states *inter alia* that 'he led man back from scholastic labours upon theological dogmas to living contact with study and exegesis of the word and Traditions' and 'it was by his influence that Sufism attained a firm position within the church of Islam.'¹⁰ The brilliance of Ghazālī's intellectual and spiritual achievements did not remain confined within the four walls of the Arab world and, as a matter of fact, his teachings inspired and influenced many non-Islamic religions and religious leaders. 'Partly translated into Latin before 1150 A.D., they (his works) exerted marked influence on Jewish and Christian scholasticism. Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest theologians of Christianity, and later Pascal

9. A. J. Arberry, *Sufism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1956), p. 80.

10. Quoted by R. A. Nicholson in *Literary History*, pp. 382-83.

were indirectly affected by the ideas of al-Ghazālī.¹¹

In al-Ghazālī's teachings, we find an intermixture of philosophic and mystic elements. His strong intellectual tendency did not allow him to welcome all the beliefs and practices of Sufi mysticism, hence he sought a synthesis of Sufism and Islam. Unlike pantheistic mystics, he regards Divine Being as personal, unique and distinct from other beings. But as a human being has a qualitative identity with the Divine Being, he is capable of knowing God. Nevertheless, he cannot be identified with God. Our knowledge of God depends on His will to make Himself known through revelation to the prophets and saints. This, by implication, suggests that God-realization absolutely depends on the grace of God. Further, it seems that pantheism appeared to be somewhat anti-Islamic to al-Ghazālī which impelled him to conceive God as a Personal Being. He was perhaps aware of the conflict which existed between pantheistic Sufism and orthodox Ulemas during the third century A.H. Ghazālī's metaphysical creed has a clear leaning towards monotheism rather than monism or pantheism. Al-Ghazālī, like most of the metaphysicians, distinguishes between ordinary sensuous knowledge derived through the instrumentality of sense-organs and spiritual knowledge or gnosis (*marīfat*) which he thinks can be acquired by pursuing the ethical discipline recommended by Sufi saints and recorded in the Sufi texts.

A spiritual seeker must, according to al-Ghazālī, scrupulously observe the following course of disciplines for the purification of heart. These are : adherence to the injunctions of religious law (*shariat*); repentance (*tauba*); poverty (*faqr*) which includes *wara* or mortification of flesh or abstinence from

all sensuous and carnal desires; trust in God (*tawakkul*); and unity (*tauḥīd*). Besides, repetitive invocation (*dhikr*) of the sweet names of God for the attainment of spiritual concentration and constant contemplation and meditation (*muraqaba*) which will ultimately open the gateway of mystic illumination and ecstasy are also to be practised by the aspirant. By going through this elaborate process of ethical and spiritual discipline, the entire psychical constitution or individuality of the spiritual aspirant is radically transmuted, his 'I'-consciousness is lost and most of his earthly and sensuous desires leave him for ever. This passing from narrow individuality is *fanā*. But this self-abnegation is rewarded by positive bliss; the mystic is blessed with a beatific vision and he abides in Divine Reality (*baqā*). Thus, gnosis or spiritual knowledge can be achieved by the inner light of the individual soul.

From what has been outlined above, it appears that al-Ghazālī puts utmost, if not exclusive, emphasis on the ethical aspect of spiritual preparation. Hence his doctrine may be designated as Ethical Mysticism. In his monumental work 'Revival of Religious Sciences', al-Ghazālī discusses with meticulous details the nature and significance of worship, the personal behaviour of a spiritual aspirant, the deadly sins which he must give up, and the way to salvation or mystic union. Al-Ghazālī's emphasis on a strict ethical mode of life as the *sine qua non* of spiritual progress reminds us of Buddhist and Jaina thinkers of India. The Upaniṣadic seers, long before al-Ghazālī, made a distinction between two kinds of knowledge, the higher (*parā*) and the lower (*aparā*). The lower knowledge consists of all the empirical sciences and arts, whereas *parā-vidyā* is higher knowledge of ultimate truth and reality, 'whereby what has not been heard of becomes heard of, what has not been thought of, becomes thought of, what has not been understood becomes

11. Philip K. Hitti, *History of Arabs*, (London: Macmillan & Co. 1960), p. 432. (Hereafter *History of Arabs*).

understood.¹² This distinction received clear recognition in the system of Vedānta advocated by Śaṅkara, and also in the Mādhyamika school of Buddhism expounded by Nāgārjuna who makes a distinction between *samvṛtti* and *paramārtha*, empirical truth and transcendental truth respectively.

Muhyiuddin Ibn al-Arabi is regarded as the greatest Muslim mystical genius and is said to be founder of the school known as Wajudiyyah, a school that taught the doctrine of Divine Emanation. He was one of the two great thinkers Spanish Islam produced (the other being Averroes). Ibn al-Arabi was born at Murcia in southeast Spain on July 28, 1165 A.D. After studying theology and jurisprudence in Seville he moved to Tunisia where he was initiated into Sufism in the year 1194. After some years, he undertook a journey which took him to Mecca where he stayed for some time. Thereafter, he visited Egypt, Iraq, Asia Minor and then settled in Damascus where he died in October 1240. His tomb in Damascus which is called the 'Philosopher's stone' is now enclosed in a large mosque bearing his name.

Ibn al-Arabi, it should be remembered, came under the influence of al-Ghazālī. He is a mystic philosopher par excellence, and with him mystical philosophy reached its zenith. He assiduously collected the different Sufi concepts scattered here and there and developed them into a well-knit system, which became a permanent source of Sufi teachings and mystic poetry. Most of the Sufi writers who came after him were greatly influenced by him. Ibn al-Arabi is said to be the author of many important books. Two of these works are especially celebrated which secured for him the honour of becoming the greatest of all Muslim mystics. These are *Al-futūhāt al-makkiya* or 'Meccan Revelations' and *Fusūs al-hikam* or 'Bezels

Divine Wisdom'. In the former, a veritable Sufi encyclopaedia in 560 chapters, he describes his own intimate mystical experience during his pilgrimage in Mecca and also the quintessence of his teachings. His method of exposition and composition is characterised by subtlety and obscurity which very often puzzle the readers and make it difficult to follow the trend of his thought. Obviously it is not possible to discuss here various aspects of his multifarious teachings. We may, however, briefly study some important facets of his thought.

The corner-stone of the philosophy of Ibn al-Arabi is the idea of 'the unity of being' (*wahdat al-wujūd*). According to him, 'all being is one and an absolute unity. This Absolute Being is unknowable by human intellect, no one except God Himself knows His real transcendent nature or fully comprehends His essential Unity. It is independent of all predication, for in it there is no duality of subject and object. This is called the state of Oneness.'¹³ God is the Absolute being, the ultimate Source of existence in whom both being and existence are united. The one Absolute Being when comprehended through human intellect appears as one in which both transcendence and immanence seem to inhere. In other words, God is both immanent and transcendent. Immanence and transcendence are two aspects of the same reality. 'The *Haqq* (Reality) of whom transcendence is asserted is the same as the *khalq* (creation) of whom immanence is asserted although (logically) the Creator is distinguished from creation.'¹⁴ (From Ibn al-Arabi's *Fusūs al-hikam*.) From this, it follows that there is no fundamental difference between the Essence and its attributes, God and the universe, and both are

12. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6.1.3.

13. *History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western*, edited by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1957), Vol. 1, p. 498.

14. *Sufism*, p. 100.

co-eternal, being grounded in the same reality.

According to Ibn Arabi, creation of the universe does not mean the creation of something absolutely new, which was non-existent prior to creation. On the contrary, it means the manifestation of what has been potentially contained in the Reality. Before creation, the world of multiplicity or the phenomenal world, was not existent in the form we perceive it. It was latent and implicitly contained in the mind of God as fixed prototypes or ideas and hence was one with the divine Essence or consciousness. And these prototypes are, in fact, intermediaries or connecting links between the one Absolute Reality and the phenomenal world. Creation means manifestation or assumption of definite name and form in the space-time continuum, it is a passage from potentiality to actuality. And it is in and through creation that God knows Himself and makes Himself known under the aspect of actuality. God in His transcendental aspect is the Absolute Being of which we cannot predicate anything. And when He is manifested through the world of things and beings, it becomes the object of knowledge. But God in His essential unity can only be realized through mystic intuition. This does not however mean that there may be total union with God in the sense of becoming one with Him, 'but there is the realization of the already existing fact that the mystic is one with God.' The description of Reality as delineated above makes one believe that Ibn Arabi advocated a pantheistic notion of God, and in fact he was severely criticized by some of his contemporaries for his pantheistic teachings. But it seems to us that al-Arabi has a clear and definite inclination towards Monism. Hence it is better to designate his doctrine as pantheistic Monism rather than pure Monism.

From the doctrine of unity of Being, Ibn Arabi arrives at the doctrine of the Perfect

Man, (*al-Isān al-kāmal*), which is the second most important pillar of his imposing metaphysical structure. The one supreme Reality reveals Himself as the universal consciousness in the Reality (spirit) of Muhammad. God is the Reality of Realities (*Haqiqat al-haqāiq*), and this attains its complete expression in the Perfect Man, who is again the miniature reality, the microcosmic being. Muhammad is the image of God in whom all the perfect attributes are harmoniously reflected. It is through the Perfect Men that God makes Himself known and only the Perfect Man knows God, loves God and is loved by God. Muhammad is the Logos, the Mediator, the Viceregent of God who has descended down to this earthly level in order to make manifest the glory of God. In this way, Ibn Arabi reinterpreted the Hallājīan doctrine of *hulul* (Incarnation) by recognizing Muhammad as the highest perfection incarnate.

Another most important and interesting conclusion that Ibn Arabi drew from his metaphysical system was the harmony of all religions. According to him, different religious doctrines, certain elements of truth and the paths of liberation laid down by these doctrines will ultimately converge into the 'true path' which will finally lead to God. So also the different forms and images of God are the manifestations of one God and the same God is worshipped through various names and images. And the very basis of worship is love which is the easiest and truest form of worship. So when God is approached through love which binds all beings together, mystical illumination, and for that matter realization of the divine nature of man, become sure and secure.

In the history of Sufism, the name of Ibn Arabi marks an epoch and his doctrine marks the zenith of Islamic mysticism, at least theologically. His influence was so abiding and far-reaching that no mystic saint or poet who followed him was free from

his influence. 'The title of the Grand Master by which he is commonly designated, bears witness to his supremacy in the world of Moslem mysticism.'¹⁵ Sufism, it may be observed, is not a philosophy of negation and mortification, but of purification and perfection—purification of inner and outer life and perfection of one's entire existence through love of God and his creation.

Ibn al-Arabi's views on unity of religions remind us of the Rg-vedic dictum *ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti*: 'The reality is one, the wise call it by many names.' In recent years Sri Ramakrishna, in the course of his extraordinary spiritual practices, put this Vedic doctrine into practice. He followed not only the traditional Hindu disciplines, but also the Islamic, Christian and other disciplines and proved that all these paths ultimately lead to the same goal and culminate in the same realization. Hence he preached, 'As many views, so many ways.' Swami Vivekananda, inspired by the teachings of his beloved Master, repeatedly

¹⁵. *Literary History*, p. 404.

reiterated the essential unity of all religions. In his numerous speeches and writings, Swamiji has shown that the unity of religions is a unique and fundamental tenet of Indian culture. When deeply understood and properly practised by the followers of different religions, this doctrine can eliminate religious bigotry and intolerance. This faith in the spiritual fellowship of all religions, which have for centuries been nourishing the spiritual life of mankind, has been eloquently expressed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan: 'If the world is to be united on a religious basis, it will not be on the basis of this or that religion, but by a co-operation among the different religions of the world. If the different religions strive to achieve their common ideals and seek to understand the differences in a sympathetic spirit, the world will be relieved of the misery and fear which now engulf it.'¹⁶

¹⁶. *Occasional Speeches and Writings* (New Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1956), p. 283.

(Continued from page 467)

state of mind a man may be, from that very point he can start a new life, by trying to rebuild his character.

Man is the architect of his own character. He has got the tremendous power of Karma at his disposal. If the bad Karmas have made him a sinner today, it is thousand times more sure that his good Karmas will make him a saint tomorrow. Because in essence man is DIVINE, and not a sinner. When man starts using the power of good Karma his mind gets more purified. As

the power of good Karma tears off the veils covering the soul, the light of the Ātman manifests itself more and more. This acts as a powerful check on bad tendencies and a spontaneous stimulus to good tendencies. And a time comes when the senses and the mind of the man become incapable of doing bad acts or thinking bad thoughts. Only then can a man be said to be established in good character. That man alone is free who is always free to be good in thought, word and deed. True freedom is built on a pure character.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE MYTHS AND SYMBOLS IN INDIAN CIVILIZATION: BY SWAMI NITYABODHANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600 004. 1980. Pp. 220. Rs. 14/-.

The book under review is a collection of seventeen essays on as many themes contributed to different philosophical journals of the East and the West. The book's title comes from the title of the first chapter, which in a way provides the key to understanding the whole book. Though some of the chapters follow independent lines of thinking, the author has tried to compare Indian thought with Western thought in all the chapters. Many of these comparisons are strikingly original. The book does not present sequential continuity from the beginning to the end, nor is there an attempt to make each chapter complete in itself. But everywhere the reader catches flashes of brilliance as the learned author analyzes and explains Eastern and Western concepts with great skill and artistry.

About the relation between myths and symbols the author says, 'Religion and myth are sisters', and 'religion becomes dry and lifeless without mythology' (p. 23). After the pioneering work of Malinowsky, Frazer and Dr. Jung, Western scholars are showing considerable interest in the meaning of myth. What is the meaning of myth in the Indian context? Says the author, 'The essence of myth, as the Hindu sees it, is the love-will of God that involves in human suffering and helps him to go beyond the human condition by gaining for man the bridge between the visible and the invisible' (p. 6). In other words, myth is 'Divine love *lived* by man'. The author further explicates this principle in two chapters devoted to a study of two Hindu deities Siva and Ganesa.

Then follow three chapters devoted to a discussion on will. The nature and function of will in Indian psychology are not as clear-cut as they are in Western thought. Swami Nityabodhananda throws new light on this theme which deserves further study. Another interesting chapter is 'How to triumph Over a Problem?' Here the reader is shown a new spiritual approach to problem-solving. 'If life poses a problem, it has also the power to solve it; life does not pose a problem which it has no power to solve' (p. 97), says the author. His observation that problems can be solved by integrating them into a larger consciousness is thought-provoking.

Throughout the book are clear signs of the

author's thorough grasp of existentialist thought and its influence on him. His comparison of the doctrine of Maya with the notion of the absurd in Camus is a brilliant attempt to reinterpret Vedanta in the idiom of modern European thought. A similar attempt along a different line is made in the chapter 'Freud, Jung and Vedanta'.

In the chapter 'The Bhakti Yoga of St. John of the Cross', the author not only gives a lucid exposition of the delicate mystical theology of that great Carmelite saint, but compares his ten stages of the soul's ascent with similar doctrines in the Bhakti scriptures of Hinduism. The author, however, rightly points out that though there exists some similarity between Hindu Bhakti and Christian Bhakti, yet each religious tradition has a specificity, and the recognition of this specificity is the primary condition for understanding the universality of religion (p. 188).

Perhaps the most brilliant essay in the whole collection is the last one entitled 'The Ascent of Woman'. It provides new insights into an important problem of the contemporary world. The clamour of modern women for parity with men in all fields is only an expression of the Eternal Feminine drawing humanity to a higher dimension of life. In order to manifest fully his potentialities, man must recognize the androgynous character of the human being and the complementarity of the sexes.

The book contains a variety of interesting topics, and every topic is discussed with the seriousness of a philosopher and the earnestness of a spiritual seeker. The author does not burden the reader with tedious value judgements but places before him some of the best elements in the religious and philosophical traditions of the East and the West in the right perspective. The usefulness of the book would have been greater if footnotes, exact references and an index had been provided.

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HOW DO I BEGIN? : BY M. P. PANDIT. Published by Dipti Publication, Sri Aurobindo Ashrama, Pondicherry-605 002. 1980. Pp. 52. Rs. 10/-.

If we are serious about concentration and meditation, and are willing to leave behind religious casuistry, this little book will be of great use.

For only then does the question of making a beginning arise at all! Taking for granted that we have gathered some clear ideas about spiritual life and its goal, there are two important questions that arise at least in the beginning: 'How do I exactly begin with mind-concentration?', and 'When I am not actually sitting for meditation, but am engaged in other activities, how do I relate my actions and thoughts to my spiritual goal?' The excellence of the book under review is that it deals not only with the first question, but also with the second one with greater emphasis. Because so far as beginners are concerned, it is the so-called secular activity that engages and powerfully influences the mind most of the time. The chapter on 'Attitudes' deals with this aspect in detail and in depth.

Sri Panditji, a spiritual seeker with years of rich experience, and a deep student of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, has given specific directions about the posture in which to sit for spiritual practice; the atmosphere needed; the type of food that helps best; care of the body; the books to be read; the types of people whose company we ought to seek—in short almost everything that a beginner should know about spiritual life. It is however in the chapter on 'Attitudes' that he gives his most mature and valuable guidance as to how to integrate day-to-day work with our spiritual aspiration.

He writes, 'The Divine is manifest not only in the soul but also in mind, in life, in matter. You owe it to the Creator, the Master of the Universe, your own highest Self, to respect this all-pervading presence of the Divine Consciousness and participate in the manifestation as an integral whole.'

The chapter on 'Experiences' identifies the sign-posts on the path of spiritual progress, with the judicious warning that they must never be taken as places of rest but merely as props against possible depression of mind and waning enthusiasm. A carefully selected book-list for further reading is added at the end.

A clear, precise practical guide for beginners in spiritual life.

SWAMI ATMARAMANANDA

SHREE GAJANAN VIJAY : BY DASAGANU ; ADAPTED INTO ENGLISH BY N. B. PATIL. Published by Shri P. H. Patil, Shri Gajanan Maharaj Sansthan, Shegaon, Maharashtra. 1980. Pp. 233. Rs. 15/-.

Gajanan Vijay meaning 'Victory of Gajanan' was originally composed in Marathi verse by

Dasaganu (1868-1962) in praise of Sri Gajanan, a modern saint of Maharashtra.

Not much of biographical details are available about the saint from the composition, but the numerous incidents recorded in it leave no doubt about his spiritual eminence. He could be classed as an *avadhūta* or a *paramahansa*, according to the Hindu religious tradition. Though his life was confined to a few villages of Maharashtra, and he appeared as a common beggar in rags, the universality of his utterances and their profundity make him relevant even beyond the borders of Maharashtra.

The translator Dr. Patil states in his introduction, 'This is a book of miracles', but adds that it is also 'interspersed with wisdom'. In fact, it is more a book of grace, for through the various intensely human situations of sorrow, bereavement, greed, anxiety, arrogance, doubt, filial love, fear and so on narrated in the book, what is surpassingly manifest is the grace and compassion of the Saint. Miraculous powers the Saint wielded no doubt, but did it all to one purpose: to turn the mind of the persons involved Godward. There was no trace of showmanship at all in him.

By weaving into the narration relevant ideas from the Upanishads and other Hindu religious traditions, Dasaganu has made the book all the more absorbing. The translation is simple and clear.

SWAMI ATMARAMANANDA
Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama
Ranchi

PRAYER AND CONTEMPLATION: BY FR. C. M. VADAKEKARA. Published by Asirvanam Benedictine Monastery, Kumbalgud, Bangalore 560 074. 1980. Pp. xii+400. Price not mentioned.

Ignorance of the rich heritage of the great world religions has kept these religions apart and prevented them from fulfilling their role in world affairs. An effective and fruitful dialogue of religions, for example, is yet to take place. It is to facilitate this that efforts are being made by individuals and institutions. The present book is the result of such an organized effort. In it we have the papers presented and discussed at two seminars organized by Asirvanam Benedictine Monastery, Bangalore in 1977 and 1978.

The book has a six-page introduction by J. Neuner and 18 papers forming three sections, namely the Christian, the Hindu and their common traditions. In the first, some of the leading spiritual writers and thinkers of the early Christian

era are presented: Evagrius, Augustine, Gregory the Great. In the second section classical spiritual authors like Patañjali, Śamkara and Madhva are taken up for study. Also common themes like Satsanga, Worship, Jīvan-Mukti, etc. are also treated. The last paper makes an effort to think and move towards an integrated Indian Christian religious experience, which is the goal set by the organizers of the seminars.

The contributions have a modest aim, namely to introduce the reader to the writings of the great spiritual masters and this they do remarkably well, in most cases. An impressive list of these spiritual teachers makes the book attractive. A gradual unfolding of the rich material available in the great traditions is successfully carried out in these papers.

The inter-religious dialogue has only been recently initiated, and so it is difficult to assess the attainment of the goal. The studies included in this book have not gone beyond the level of comparing and assessing the sources in both Christian and Hindu traditions. Probably a theology of world religions is a necessary prerequisite for such an effort. Although this is not attempted in the book, yet its emergence is also clearly in sight in so far as the materials are made available to all. The last paper makes an effort in this direction in a more explicit way. But that is not sufficient because of the vastness of the area as well as the acuteness of the problems and questions raised by actual deep-level encounter and penetration. Thus questions about the possible source of the 'inspired writings' in both the religions, etc. are found

to be thorny issues on this path. In spite of quite a number of errors in printing (of which a list is given in the beginning itself), the book is quite attractive. It serves a very useful purpose: to make available to a wide spectrum of people not only the method and path of studying other religions, but also a good deal source material. Sponsors of the Studies in Christian and Hindu Spirituality Series deserve our gratitude.

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ARSA PRAYOGA SADHUTVA NIRUPANAM: EDITED BY DR. K. KUNJUNNI RAJA. Published by The Adyar Library and Research Centre, The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Madras 600 020. Pp. 35. Price not mentioned.

Many a time we come across usages in Sanskrit works that cannot be justified according to the rules given by Pāṇini. Some of these appearing in the works of Vyāsa, Vālmiki and others are treated as *ārṣa-prayogas*, usages by seers and therefore acceptable. In the present work the author explains the deviations from acceptable Paninian system on the basis of the grammatical rules governing Vedic usages as given by Pāṇini. Great poets like Vyāsa and Vālmiki employed Vedic usages says the author, because their minds were deeply saturated with Vedic texts. Some of the author's explanations and justifications are not convincing; but the attempt is praiseworthy. The book is edited well with notes.

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NEWS AND REPORTS

VIVEKANANDA VEDANTA SOCIETY OF CHICAGO

GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS, 1981

Inaugurated on 19 January 1930, the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago has now completed fifty years of active and useful spiritual service to the people of Midwestern USA. The Centre's Golden Jubilee is therefore being celebrated on a grand scale, commensurate with the tremendous dynamism the Centre has shown, especially during the last fifteen years. The celebrations began at the Society's temple on March 8, 1981, with a Puja and Homa ceremony to honour the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna. On

April 4 there was a sitar recital as well as classical Indian vocal music. The next event was a banquet on May 15. Several distinguished Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order graced the occasion, as did the well-known astrophysicist Dr. S. Chandrasekhar, Professor Emeritus at the University of Chicago. The theme for the evening was 'The Approach to Reality: Vedanta and Modern Science'. The following two days, May 16 and 17, witnessed the annual Spring Festival at the Vivekananda Monastery and Retreat in Ganges, Michigan, a sub-centre of the Chicago Society.

The second phase of the Golden Jubilee Year celebration began on June 13, 1981, at 6.30 p.m.

at the Emerson Junior High School, Oak Park, Illinois, with a benefit performance of classical Carnatic music and a classical 'Bharat Natyam' dance.

On Friday, August 7, at the Chapel of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society, Marie Louise Burke ('Gargi'), a leading interpreter of Swami Vivekananda in the West, gave a talk entitled 'Advaita for the West'. Gargi's view is that, although he touched upon the two other schools of dualism and qualified monism, Swami Vivekananda's main purpose in coming to the West was to teach Advaita Vedanta. She said that 'the human mind cannot stop at dualism. We in the West must go ahead, we cannot speak of unity in the external universe and then deny that unity in our spiritual world.'

On Saturday August 8, the celebrations continued at the Vivekananda Monastery and Retreat at Gangestown, Michigan. At 11.00 a.m. a worship ceremony was conducted in the chapel of the Monastery. At 12.15 the museum was consecrated by a Fire Ceremony conducted by Swami Prabuddhananda, Head of the Vedanta Society of Northern California in San Francisco.

In the afternoon, after the invocation and some devotional music, Swami Bhashyananda introduced Marie Louise Burke, who this time presented her concept of 'The Third Order of Vedanta'. The appellation 'third order of Vedanta' was inspired by Swami Vivekananda's words to his disciple Chakravarty: 'You are not a householder nor a sannyasin but a third type.' It was also inspired by the movement for non-monastics initiated by St. Francis of Assisi which was called a 'third order'—'being in the world but not of it'. Gargi added that this new type of non-organization is in a class by itself. It is not monasticism nor householderism, and its ideal should be Mahavir ('great hero'), the great disciple and devotee of Sri Rama. A Vedantic Mahavir, Gargi continued, 'is a man or a woman who is not married, has been initiated by a Swami of the Ramakrishna Order and is dedicated to the welfare of humanity.'

Swami Bhashyananda announced the theme of the next session which was 'The Growing Influence of Sri Ramakrishna's Life and Teachings over the World'. Swami Prabuddhananda then spoke, stressing the accessibility of God. Sri Ramakrishna, he said, emphasized that religion means spiritual and mystical experience. The Master used to talk about God in very intimate terms, as a Person with whom he could conduct

a conversation. Speaking about Sri Ramakrishna's universality, Swami Prabuddhananda said that Sri Ramakrishna had the genius to be able to talk to each person in his or her own psychological language.

The following speaker was Swami Bhavyananda, Head of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre in London, who came especially for this occasion. Through a series of anecdotes from his experiences in Assam and England, punctuated by his delightful good humour, the Swami narrated several stories illustrating the marvellous way in which Sri Ramakrishna's power works to carry out His mission of salvation throughout the world.

After vespers and supper a slide show entitled 'Vedanta Around the World' was presented.

On Sunday, August 9, the day began at 5 a.m. with a *vina* recital, followed by prayer and meditation. After breakfast, tours of the museum were conducted. The Sunday service began with a piano recital, followed by the invocation and prayer by Swami Bhashyananda. After more music, the theme of the day—'The Steps to Building up Spiritual Life'—was presented by Swamis Prabuddhananda and Bhavyananda. Swami Prabuddhananda defined life as self-expression in growth and evolution. He added that this growth can be hastened by disciplines, and that growth should be expressed both in spiritual and secular life. Swami Bhavyananda said that the steps to build the spiritual and secular lives are the same, and that there is no easy way out. At the human level, discipline is the way that works. The Swami recommended meditation, reading of the scriptures, and avoiding building up bad habits.

With a vote of thanks, the festivities of the second phase of the Golden Jubilee Year of 1981 came to an end.

From September through November a series of Sunday talks are being given at the Chicago temple on various religions of the world, each being presented by one of its exponents, thus forming a Parliament of Religions to commemorate Swami Vivekananda's momentous participation in the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in September 1893. The Parliament is to be concluded on November 22 by the world-renowned Prof. Huston Smith, who will give a summarizing talk on Vedanta. Finally, the year-long celebrations will end in the first week of December with a symposium on 'Vedanta and Science', in which prominent scientists are to participate.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Continuing Education

What was once called 'adult education' has in recent years assumed great importance under the more comprehensive term 'continuing education'. This change in name reflects the change in the role educational institutions are expected to play in enhancing the socio-economic transformation of contemporary society. Democracy, industrialization and the spirit of nationalism have made education an imperative need for all citizens. Universities are now under tremendous pressure to extend educational facilities outside the normal channels and to play a more diversified and creative role in society.

The International Commission on Development of Education has emphasized the following aspects of continuing education. 'There are many possible definitions of adult education. For a large number of adults in the world today it is a *substitute* for the basic education they missed. For the many individuals who received only very incomplete education it is the *complement* to elementary or professional education. For those whom it helps respond to new demands which their environment makes on them, it is the *prolongation* of education. It offers *further education* to those who have already received high-level training. And it is a means of *individual development* for everybody. One or other of these aspects may be more important in one country than in another, but they all have their validity.'

These five definitions reflect the educational needs of the three main strata of society: the poor, the middle class and the affluent. The majority of people in India of course belong to the first category. Continuing education in their case should serve as a substitute for the rudiments of literacy which they could not acquire in their childhood. However, many among them have gained some technical skill without formal training and are employed in factories, workshops, etc. Providing them basic theoretical knowledge, as a complement to the manual skill which they already have, can improve their performance.

Then there are people mostly belonging to the middle class who have acquired a fairly high level of education but need higher education for further advancement in their profession. For instance, a technician who holds a diploma in engineering may need a degree. Through evening colleges and correspondence courses educational institutions try to meet this need for prolongation of education.

In all branches of science, technology, medicine, agriculture, commerce and social welfare, the frontiers of knowledge are being pushed forward so fast that professional people have to keep pace with the advancement constantly. To help them universities organize seminars, reorientation courses and extension services.

The most important function of continuing education, however, is in the field of raising the level of culture in the individual and in the nation. In modern times education can no longer be restricted to formal studies only meant for the youth. It has become a vital cultural process for individual development and social integration and progress.
